



US008483508B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Yen et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 8,483,508 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Jul. 9, 2013**

(54) **DIGITAL IMAGE TONE ADJUSTMENT**

(75) Inventors: **Jonathan Yen**, San Jose, CA (US);
William C. Kress, Mission Viejo, CA
(US); **Robert Poe**, Encinitas, CA (US)

(73) Assignees: **Kabushiki Kaisha Toshiba**, Tokyo (JP);
Toshiba Tec Kabushiki Kaisha, Tokyo
(JP)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this
patent is extended or adjusted under 35
U.S.C. 154(b) by 323 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **12/941,876**

(22) Filed: **Nov. 8, 2010**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2011/0051161 A1 Mar. 3, 2011

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 12/194,025,
filed on Aug. 19, 2008, now abandoned.

(60) Provisional application No. 61/258,641, filed on Nov.
6, 2009.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
G06K 9/40 (2006.01)
H04N 1/60 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **382/274; 358/1.9**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

USPC .. 382/274–275, 305, 312, 165, 169; 348/672,
348/673, 674, 687; 345/428, 611; 358/1.9,
358/3.26, 516, 519, 521, 522

See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

5,422,680	A *	6/1995	Lagoni et al.	348/674
5,515,113	A *	5/1996	Takeshima	348/687
7,424,148	B2 *	9/2008	Goh	382/169
8,125,569	B2 *	2/2012	Flores et al.	348/672
8,131,108	B2 *	3/2012	Neuman	382/274
2009/0245636	A1	10/2009	Yen	
2009/0274383	A1	11/2009	Yen	
2010/0046832	A1	2/2010	Kress	
2011/0026818	A1	2/2011	Yen	

* cited by examiner

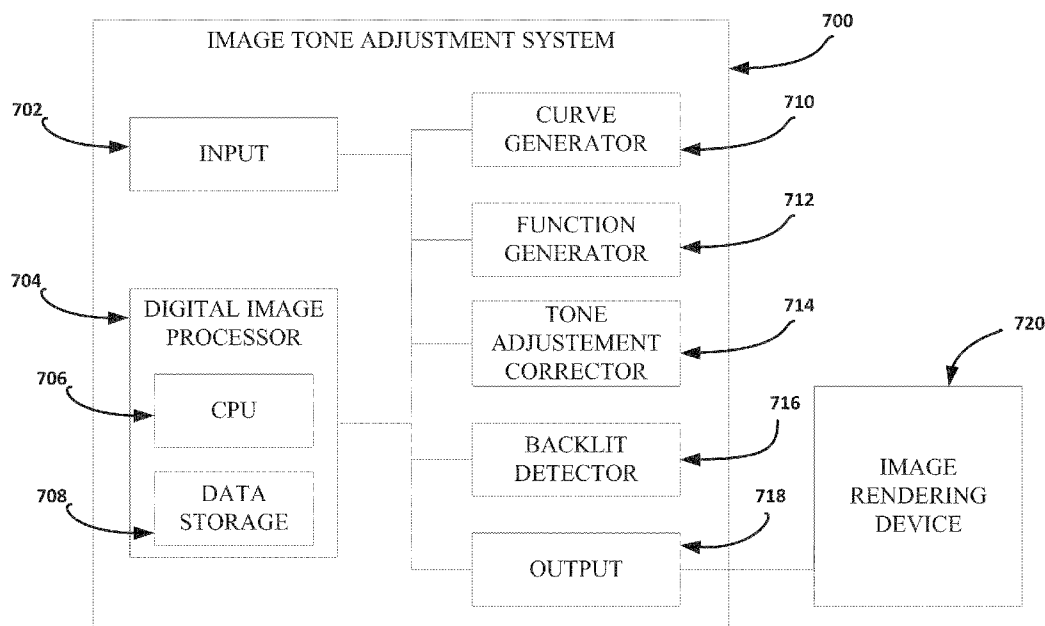
Primary Examiner — Kanjibhai Patel

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — SoCal IP Law Group LLP;
Steven C. Sereboff; Jonathan Pearce

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Image tone adjustment systems and methods are disclosed. The system of the present invention includes an input to accept an input image. A curve generator is also disclosed that is used to generate a tone reproduction curve including a contrast stretch of the input image, a white stretch of the input image and a black stretch of the input image. Backlit correction is also applied by the tone adjustment corrector to thereby generate a tone adjusted image.

17 Claims, 28 Drawing Sheets



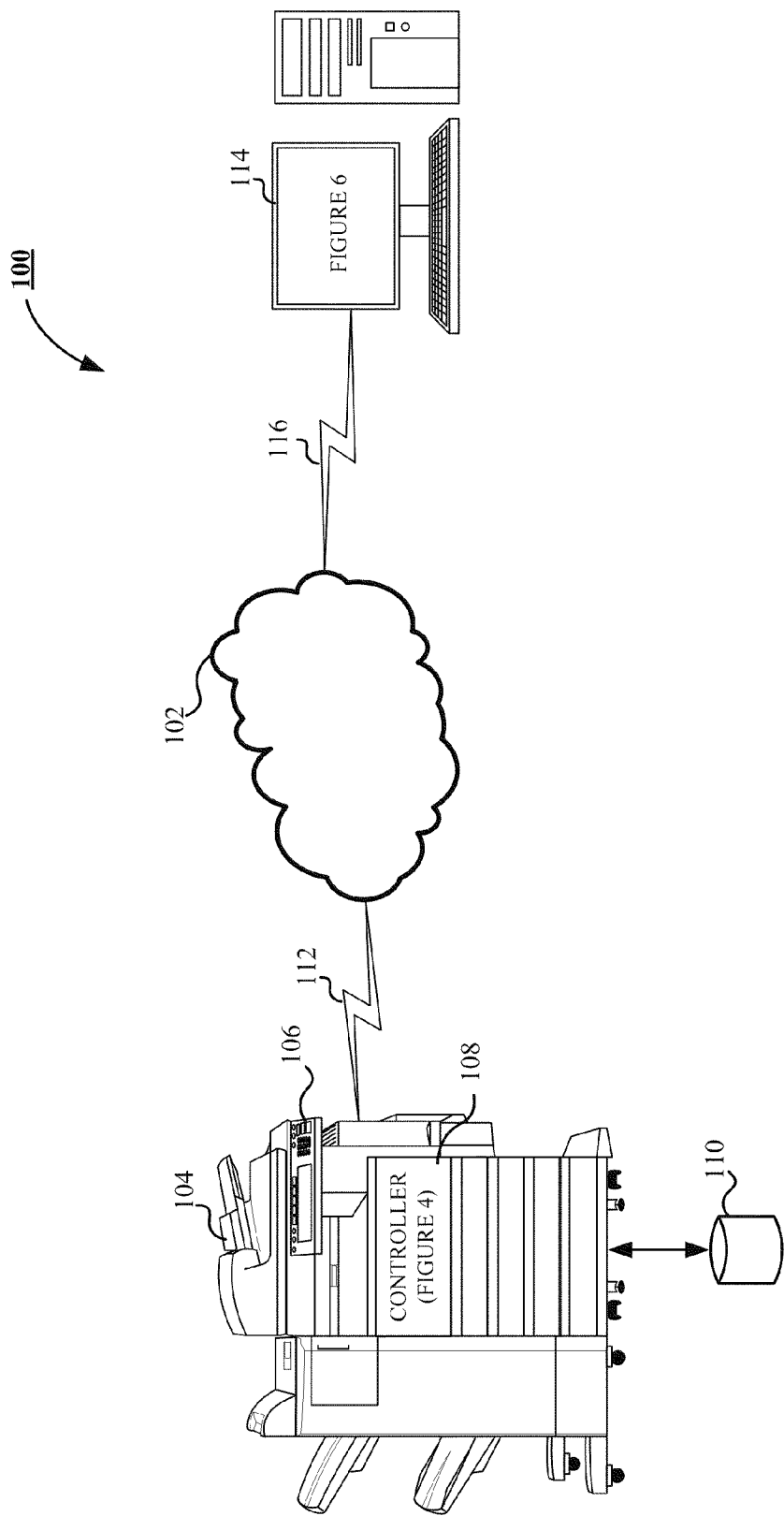
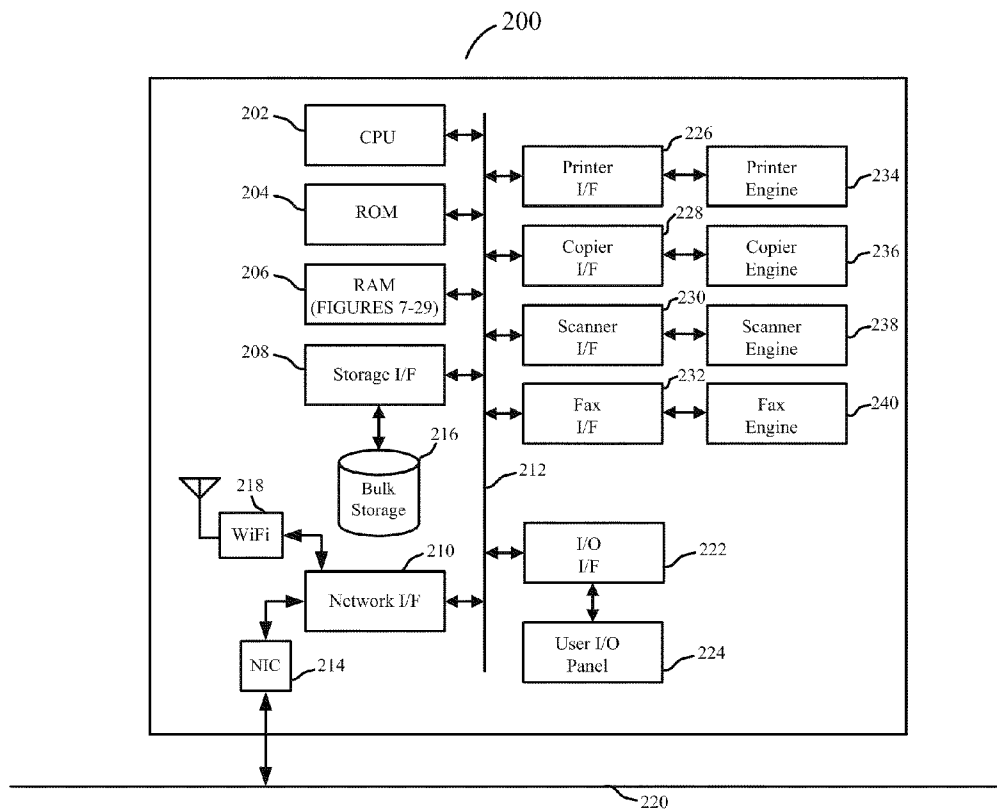
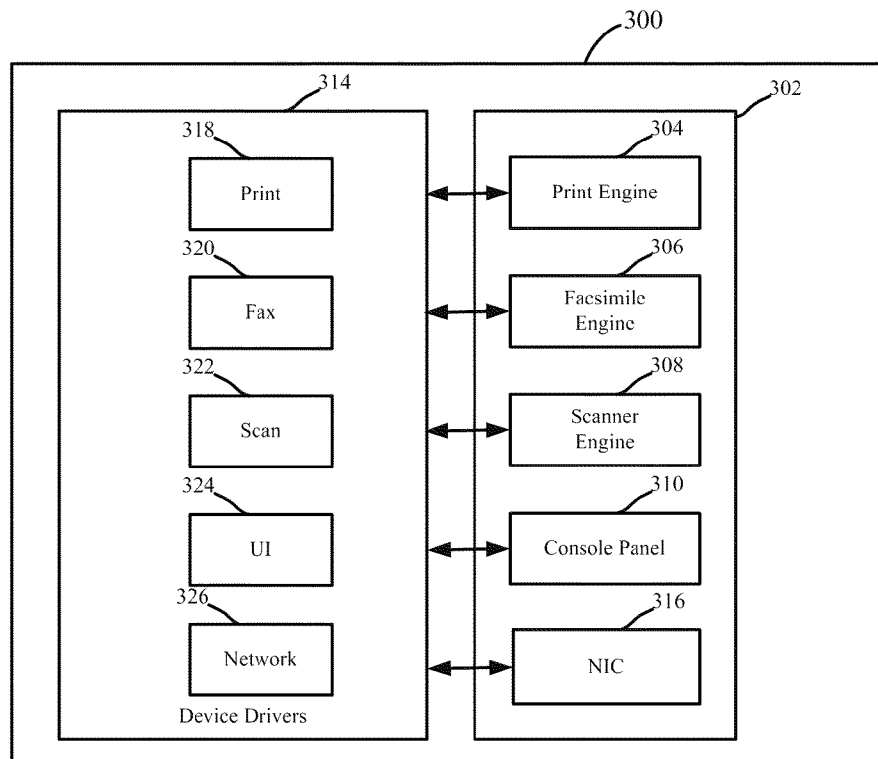
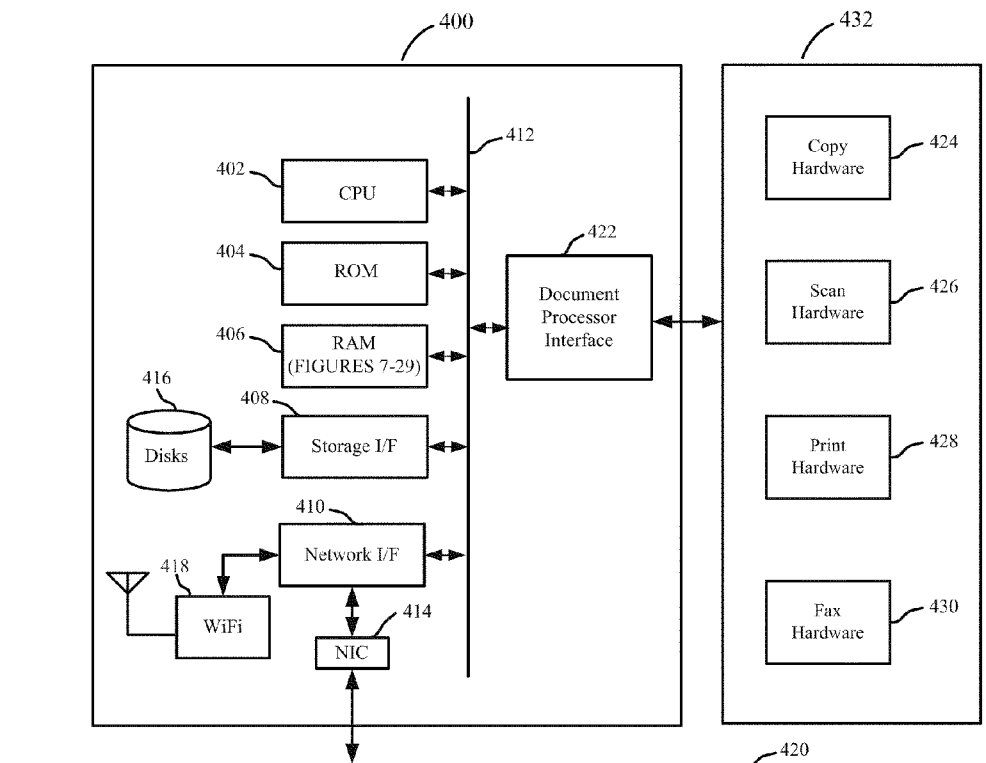
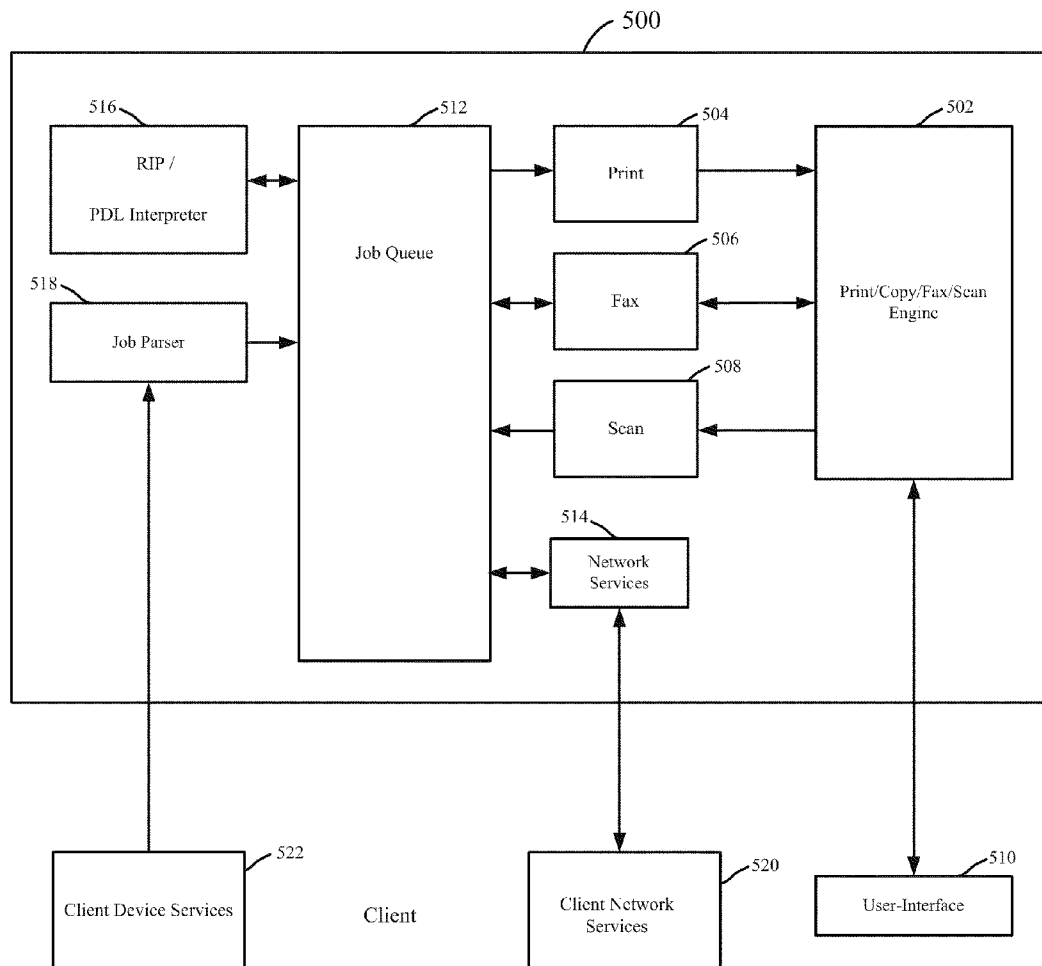


FIGURE 1

**FIGURE 2**

**FIGURE 3**

**FIGURE 4**

**FIGURE 5**

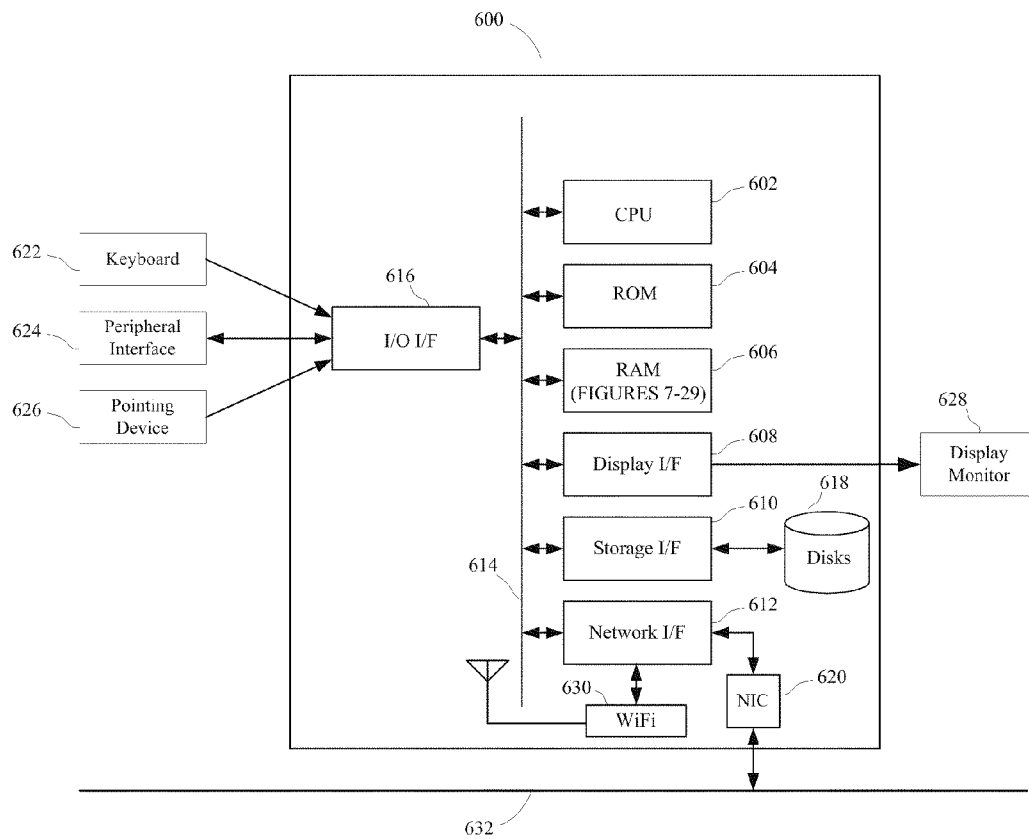


FIGURE 6

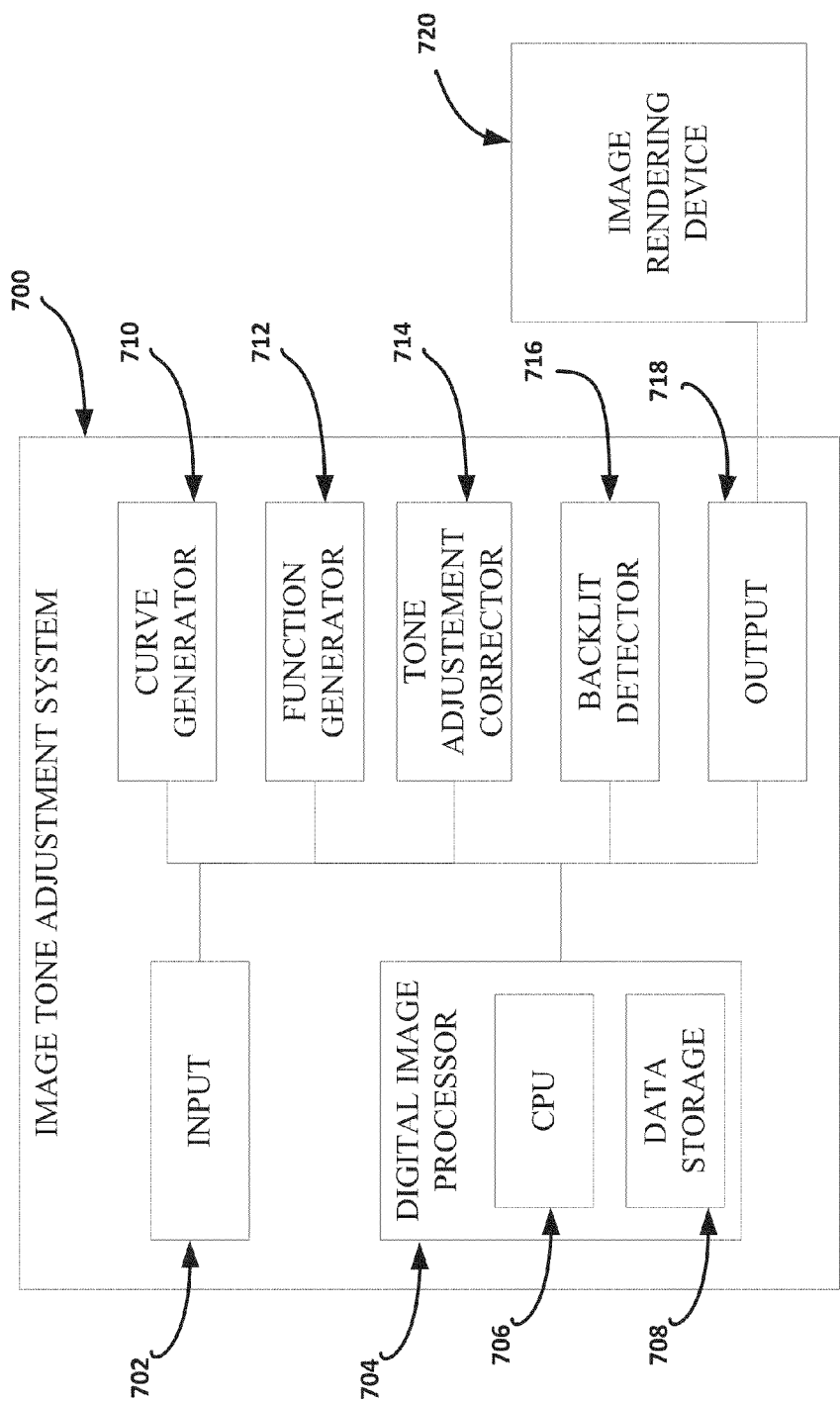
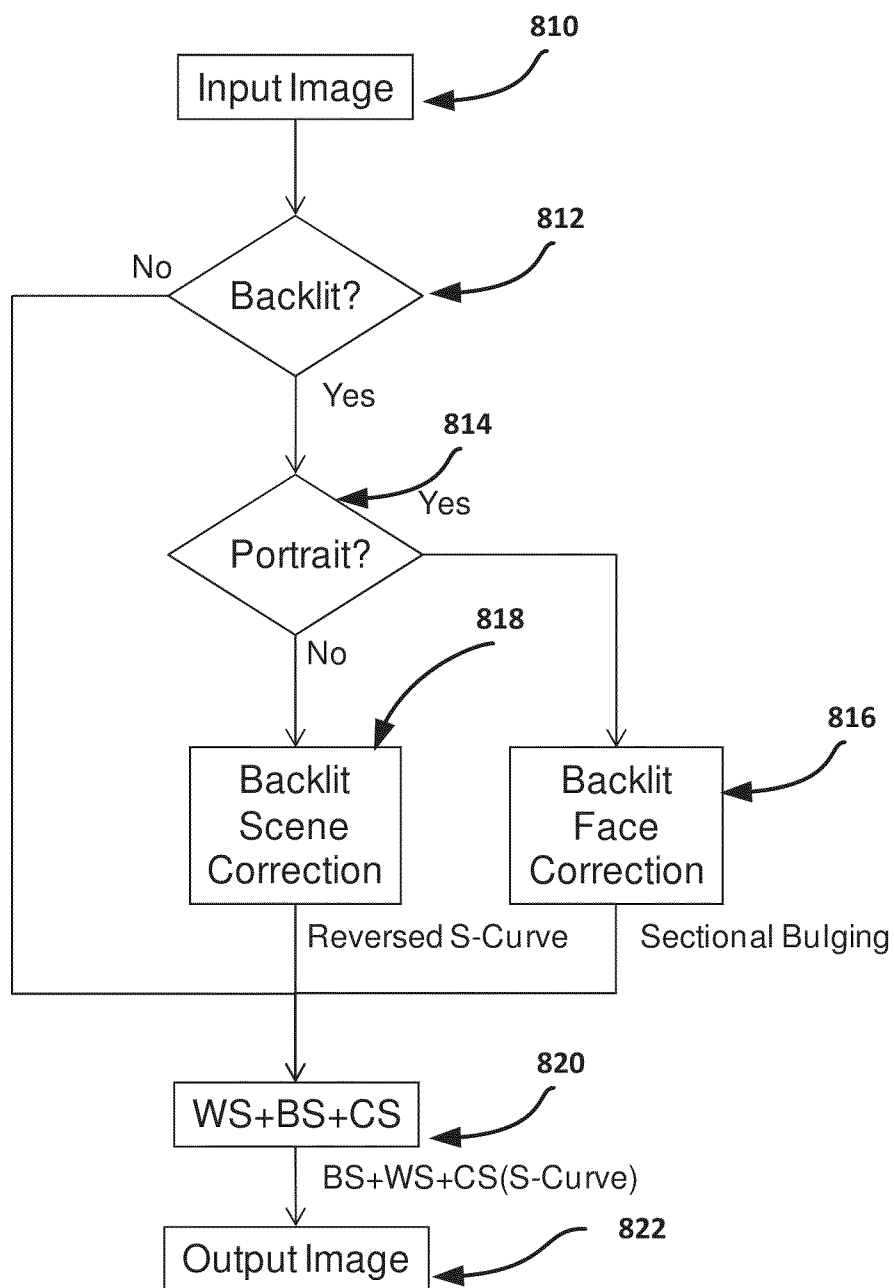


FIGURE 7

**FIGURE 8**

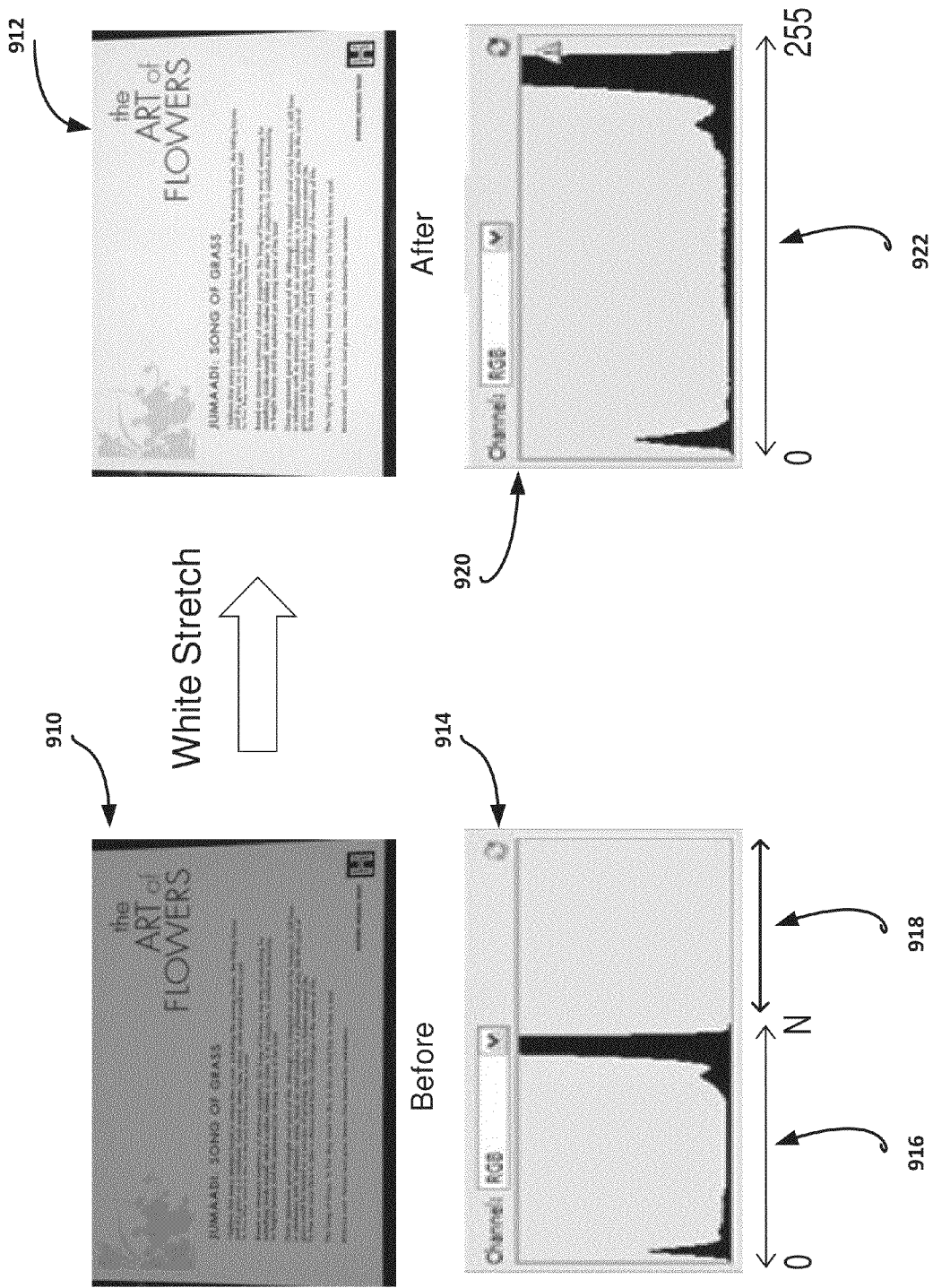


FIGURE 9

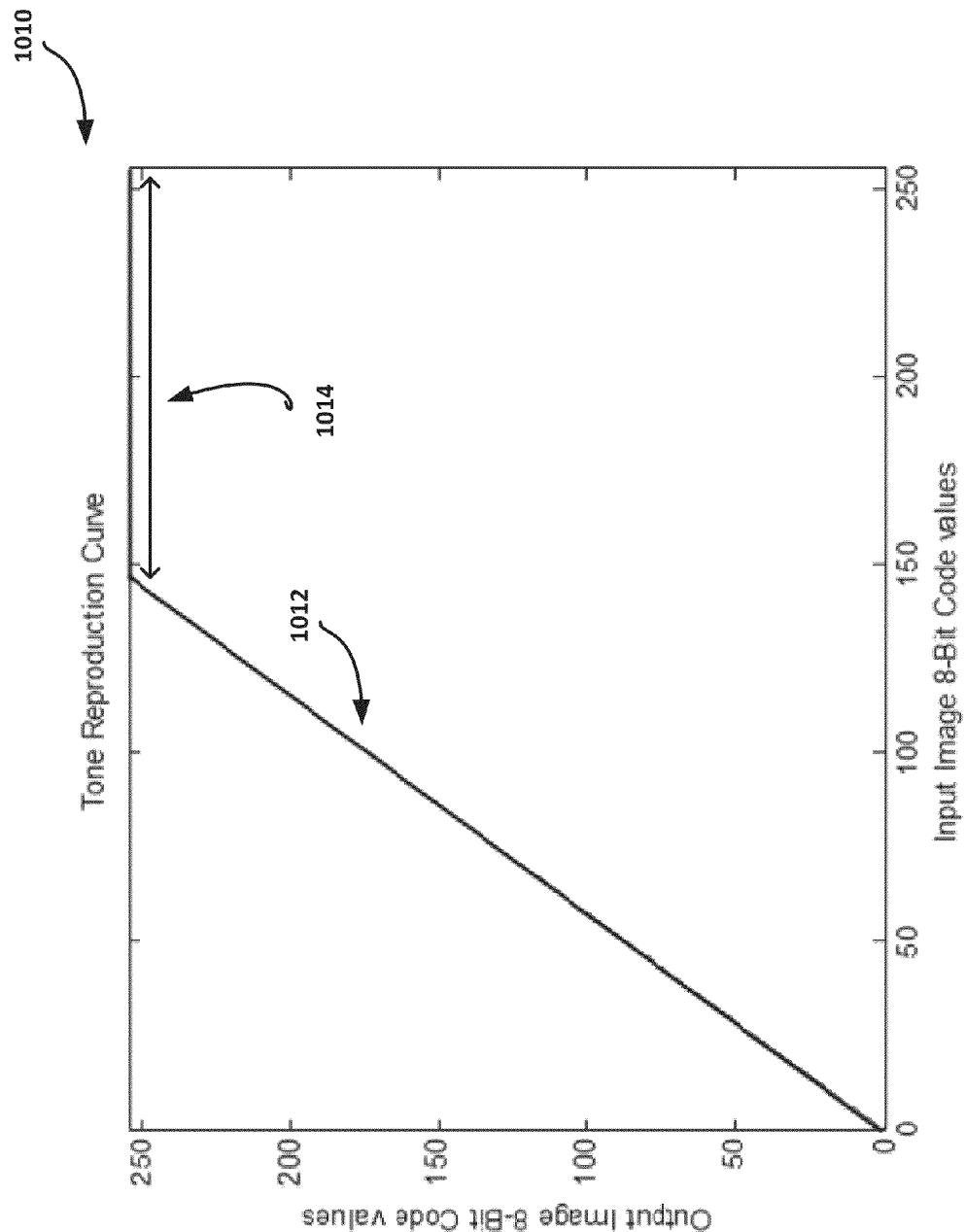


FIGURE 10

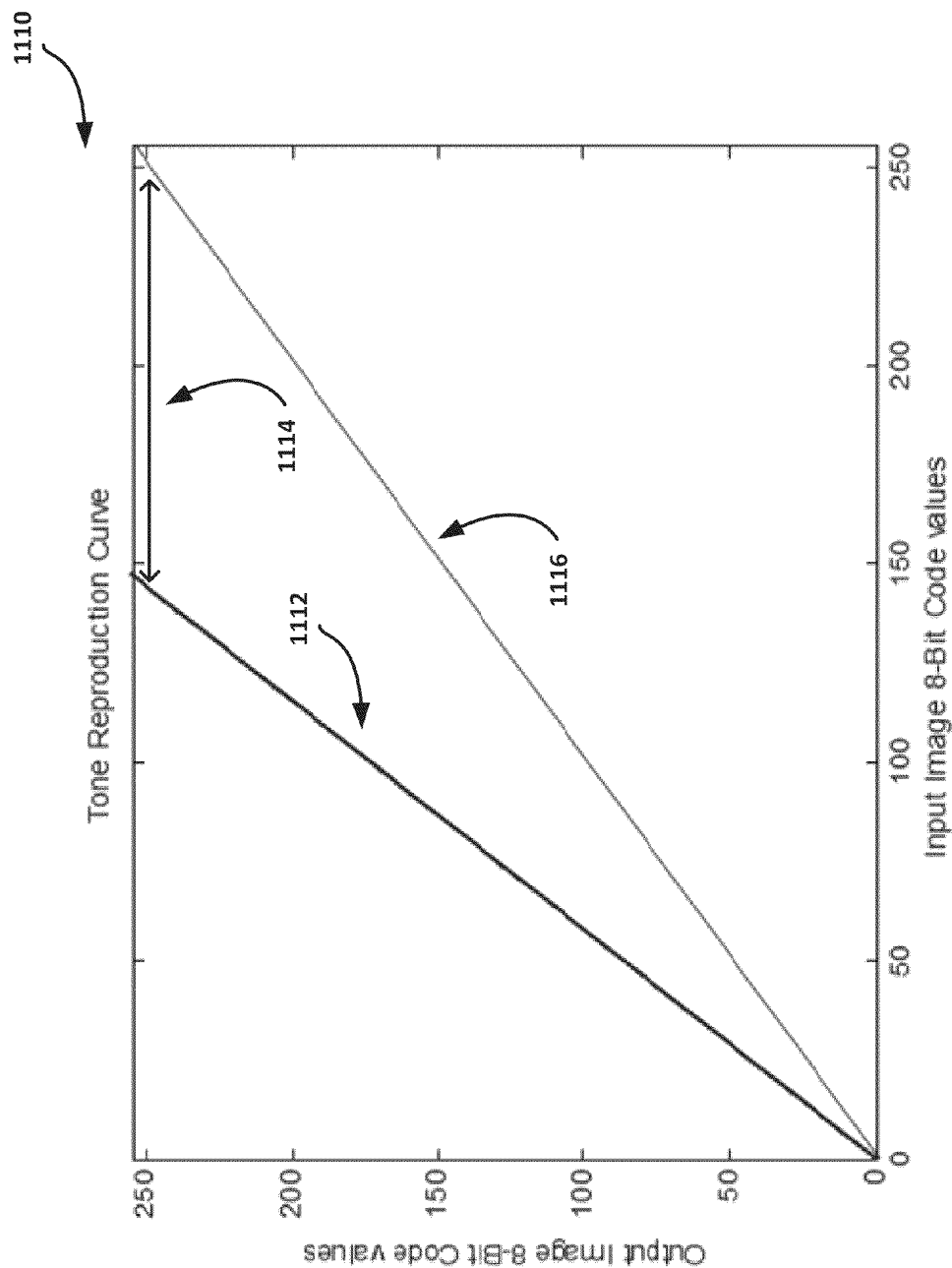


FIGURE 11

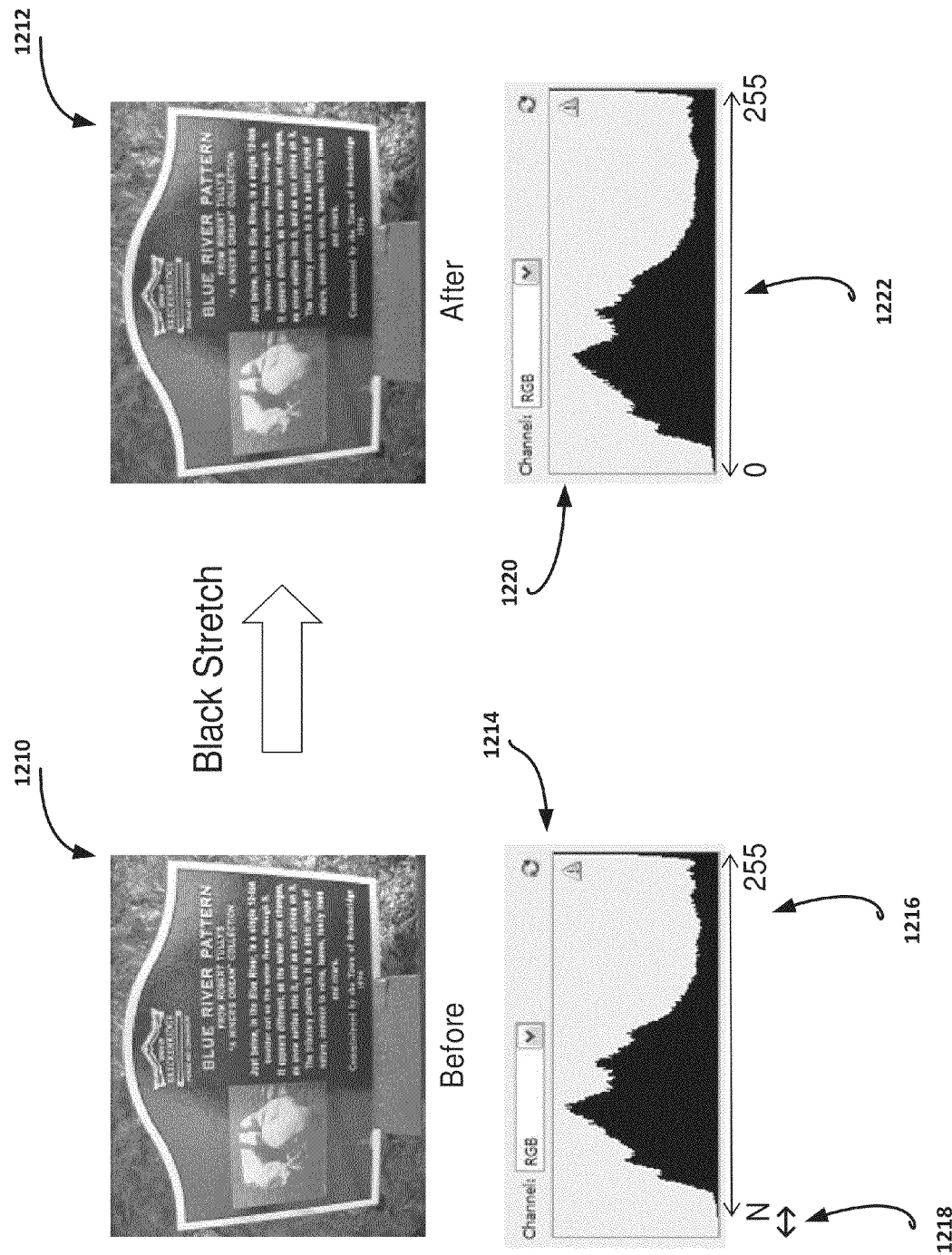


FIGURE 12

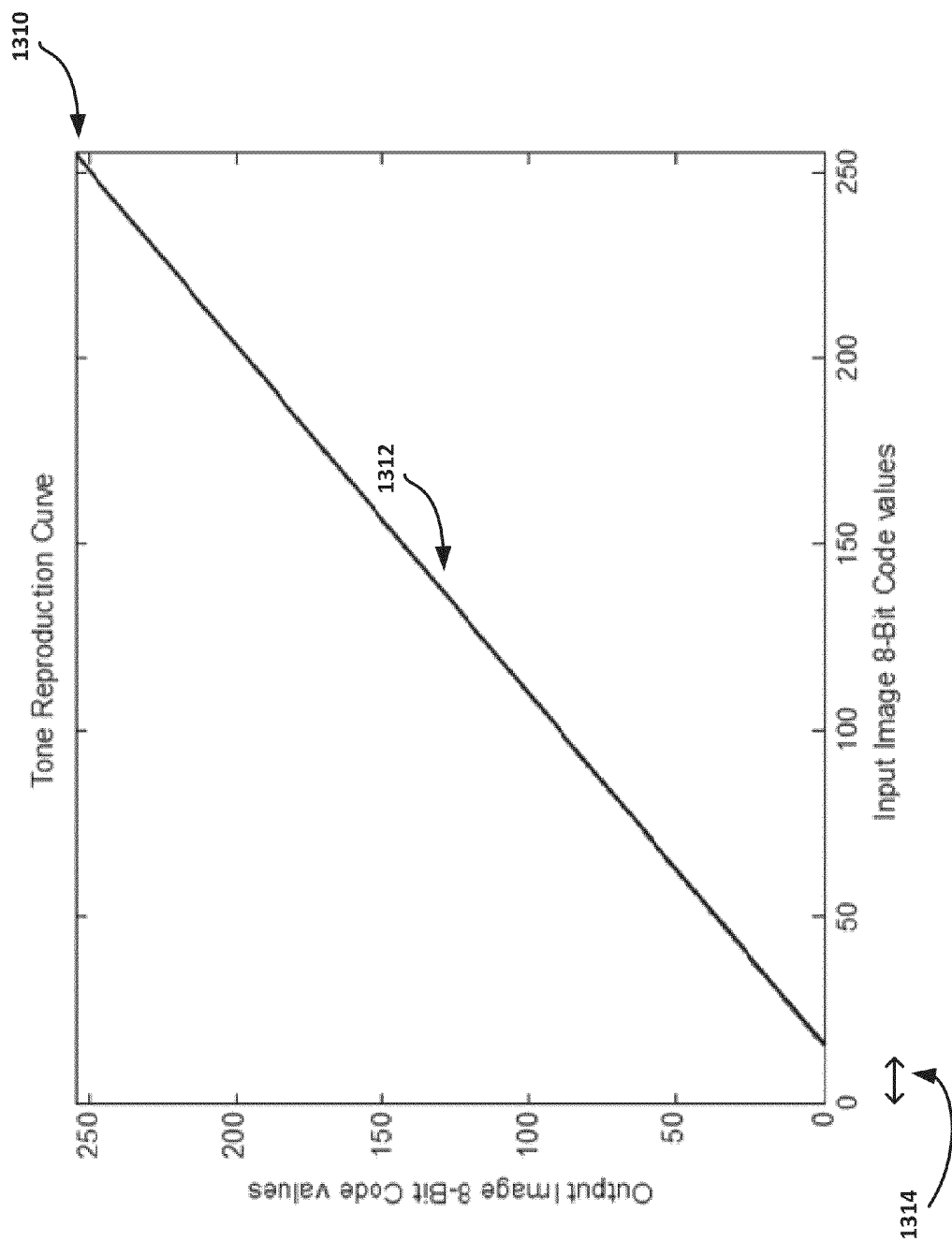


FIGURE 13

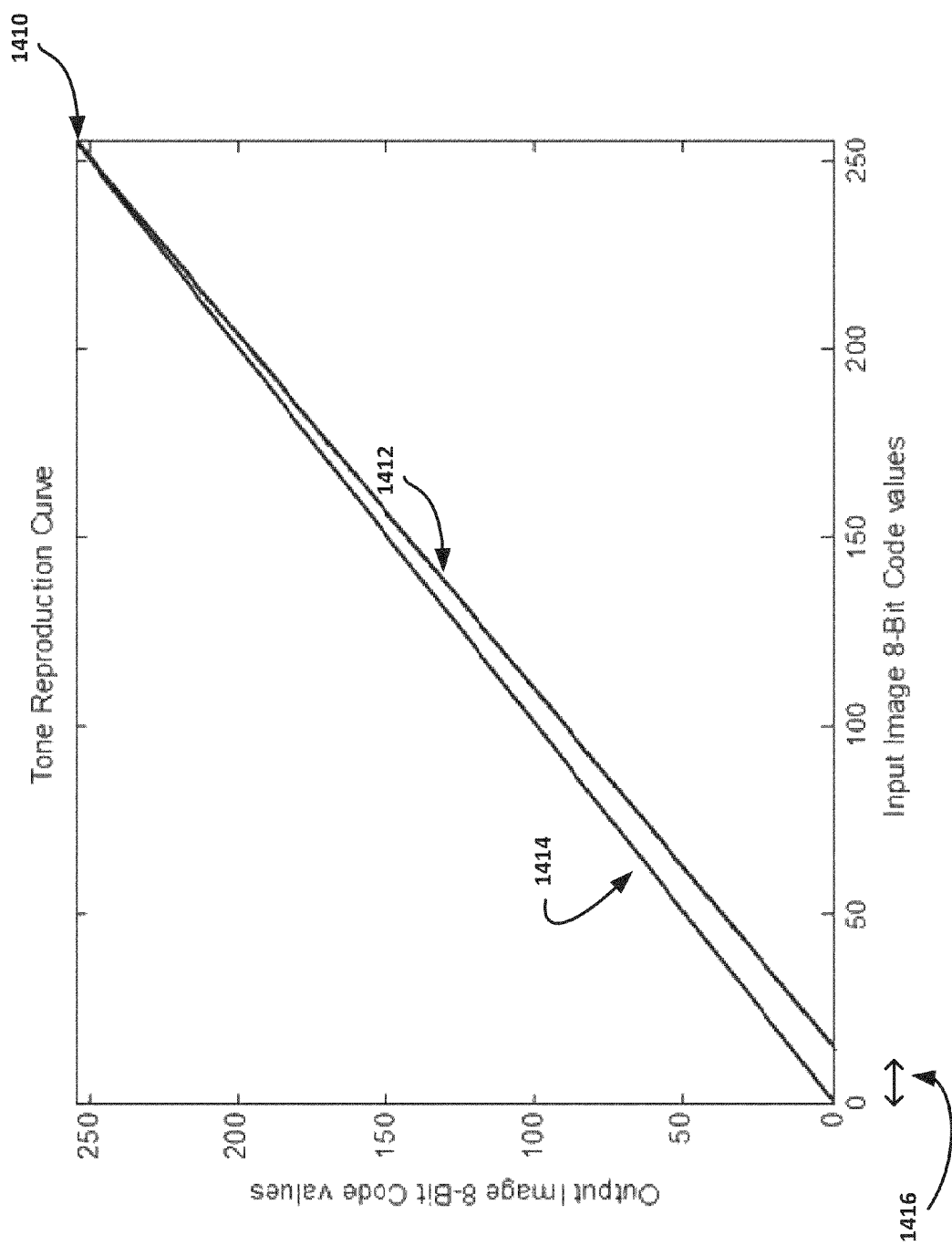


FIGURE 14

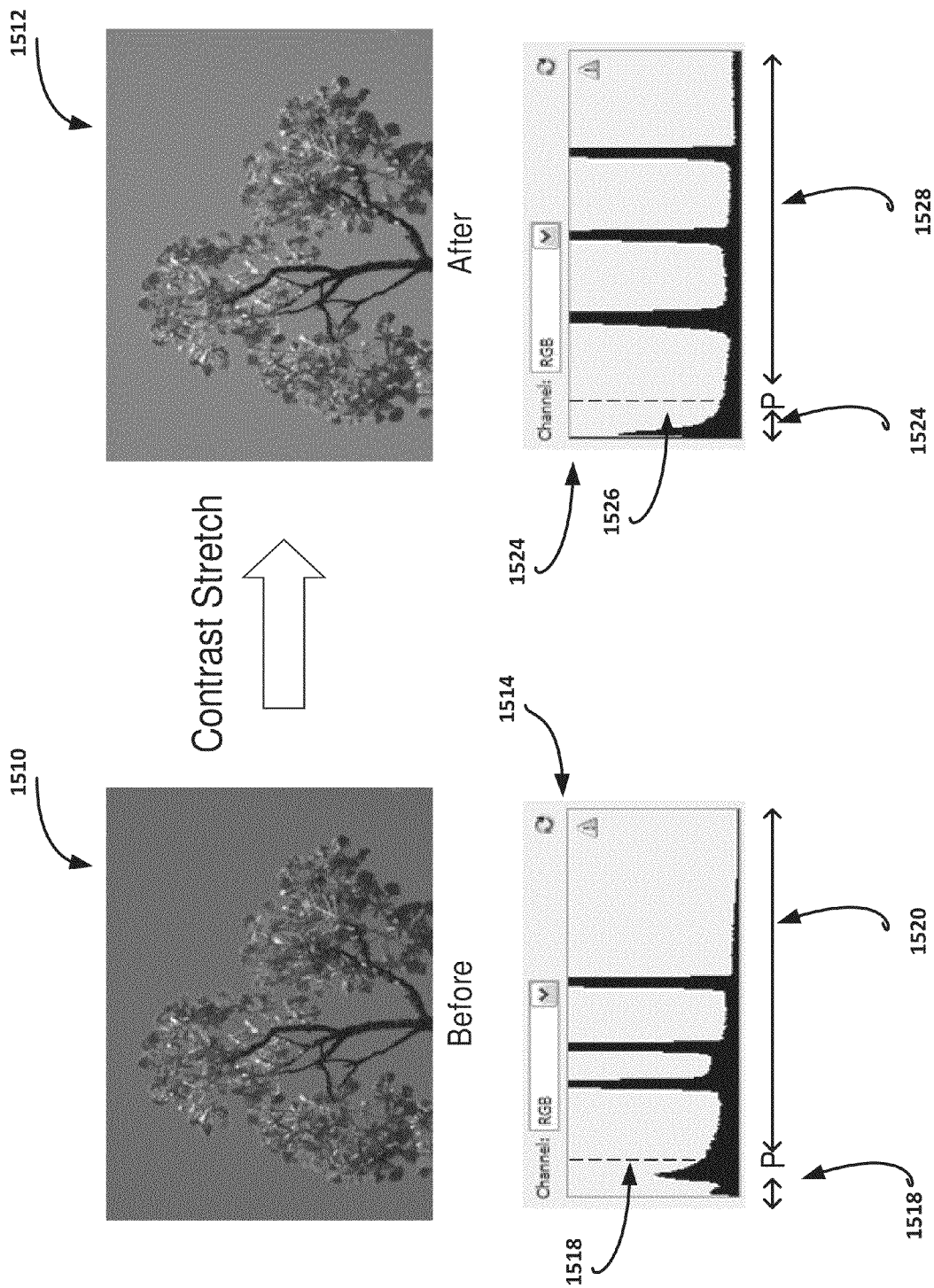


FIGURE 15

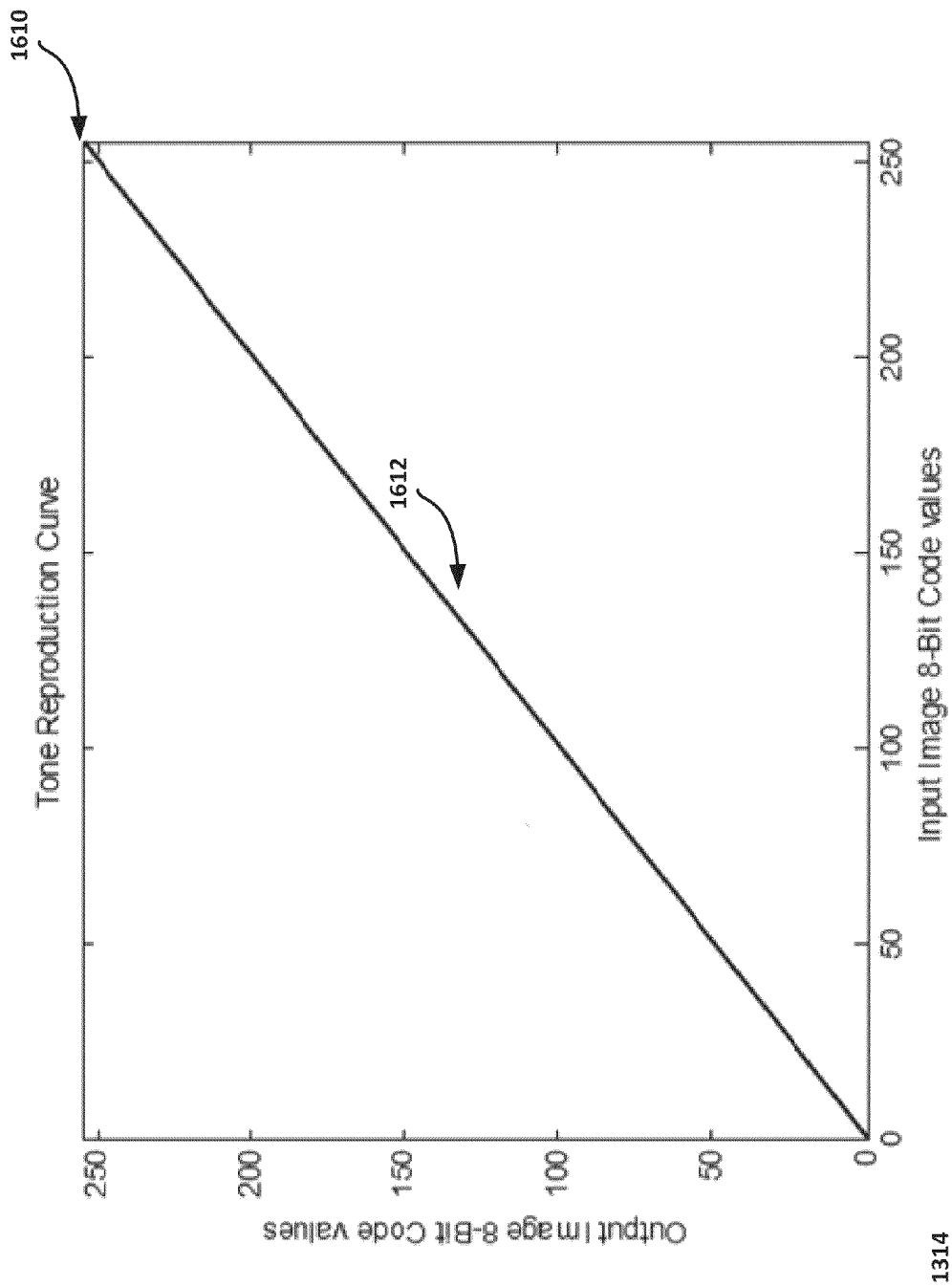


FIGURE 16

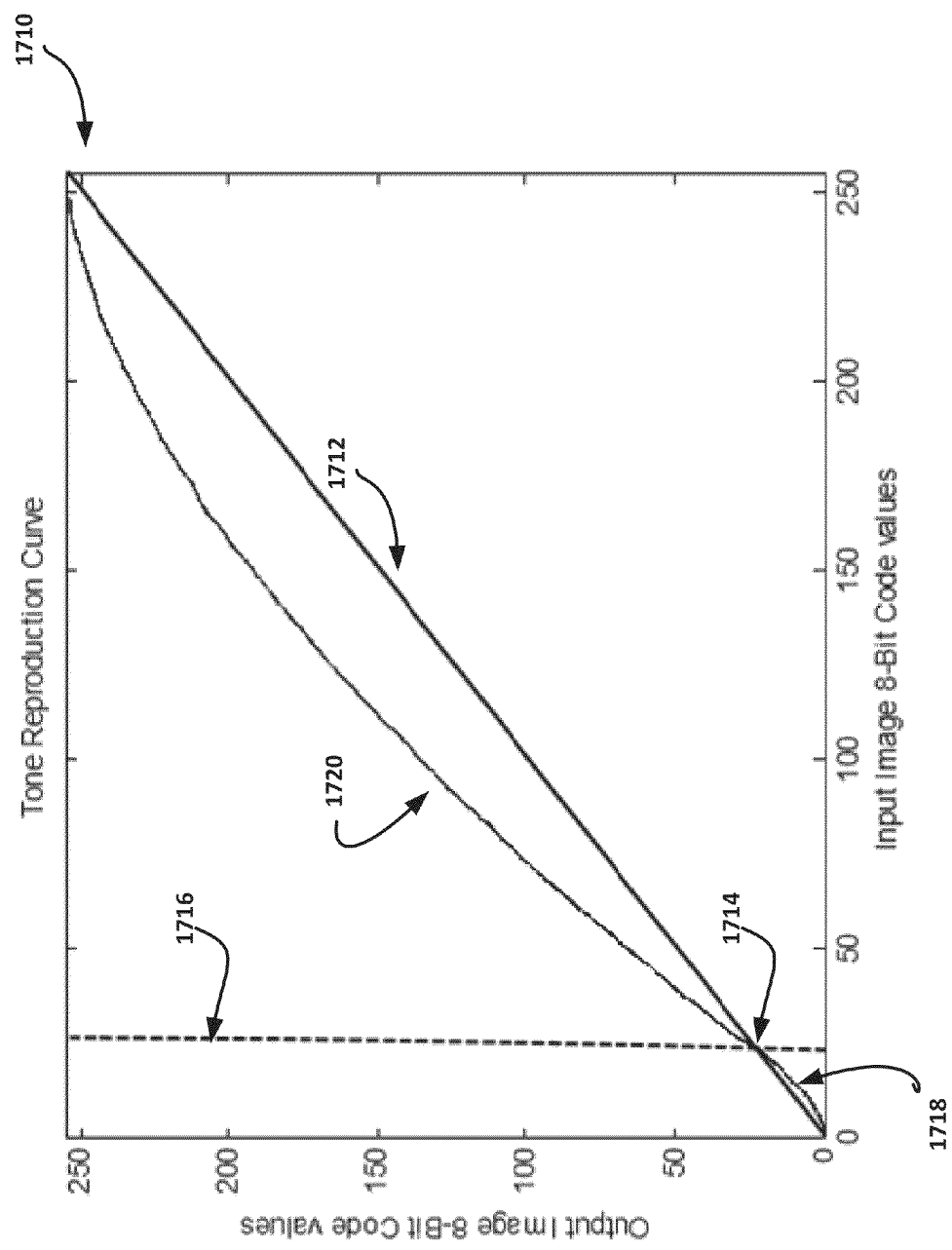


FIGURE 17

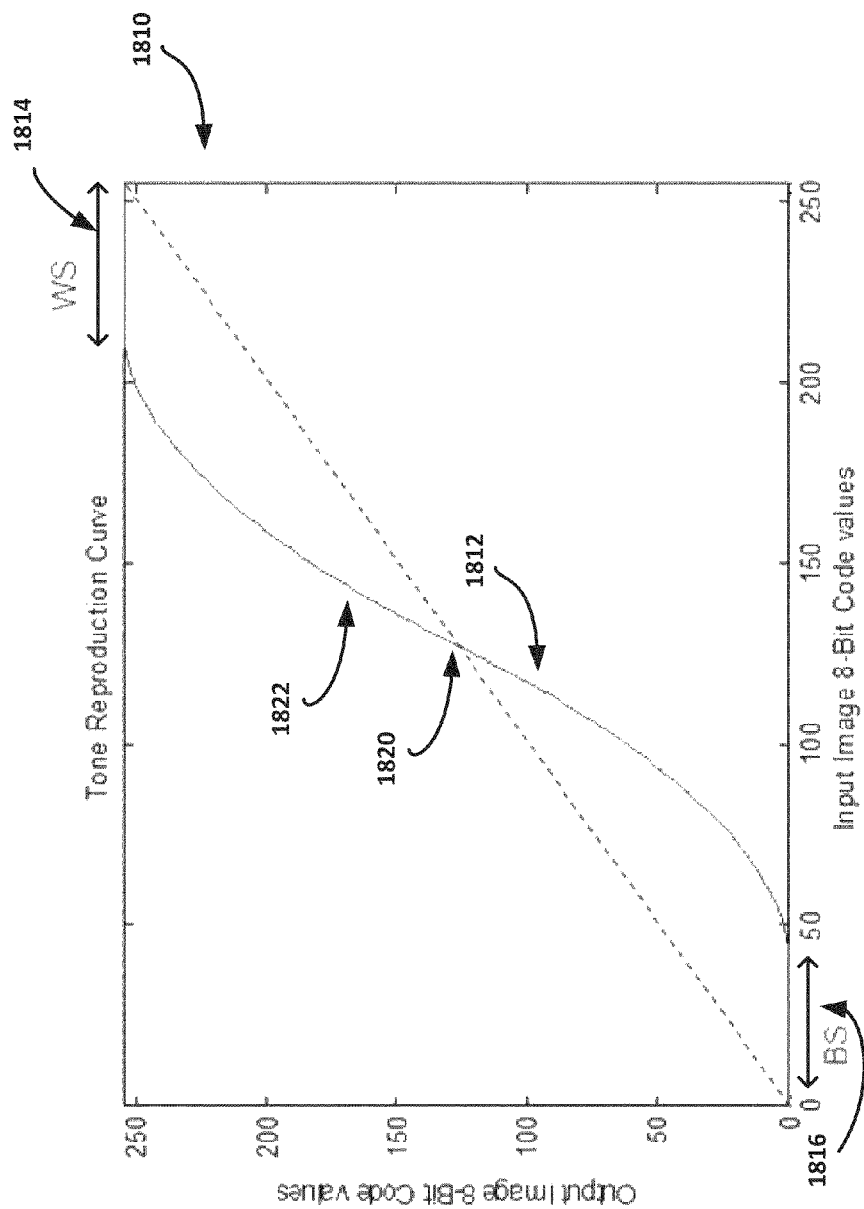


FIGURE 18

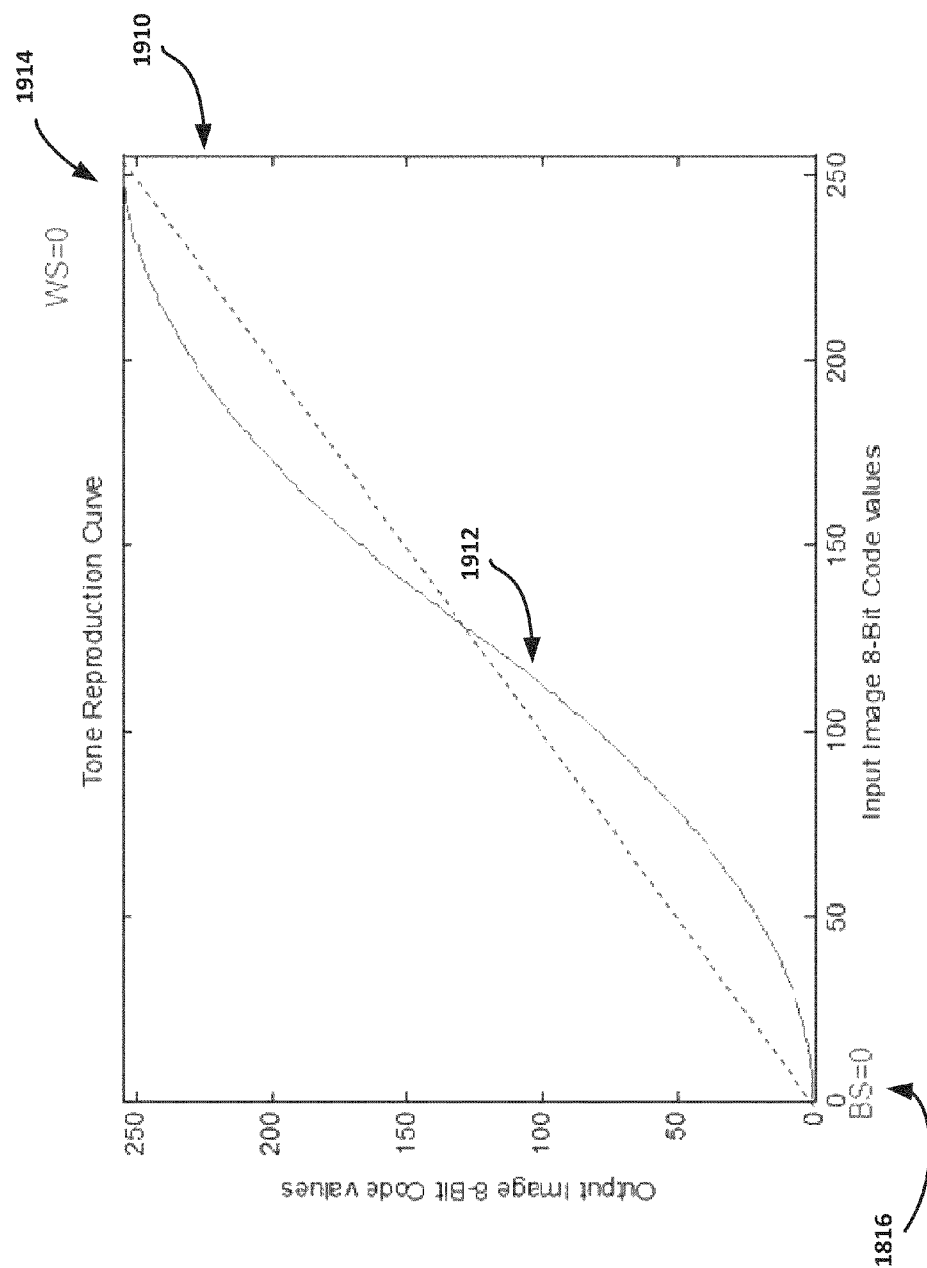


FIGURE 19

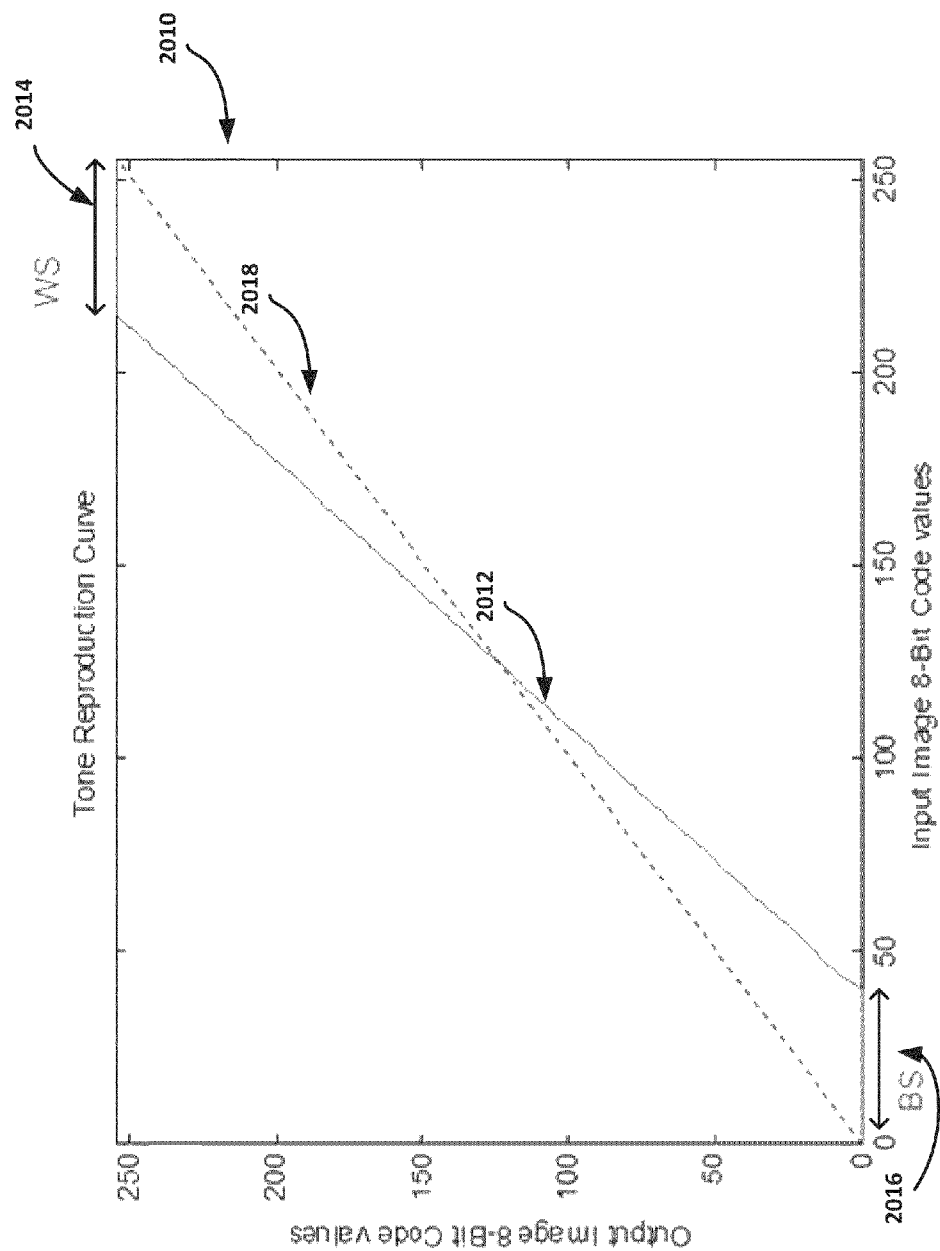


FIGURE 20

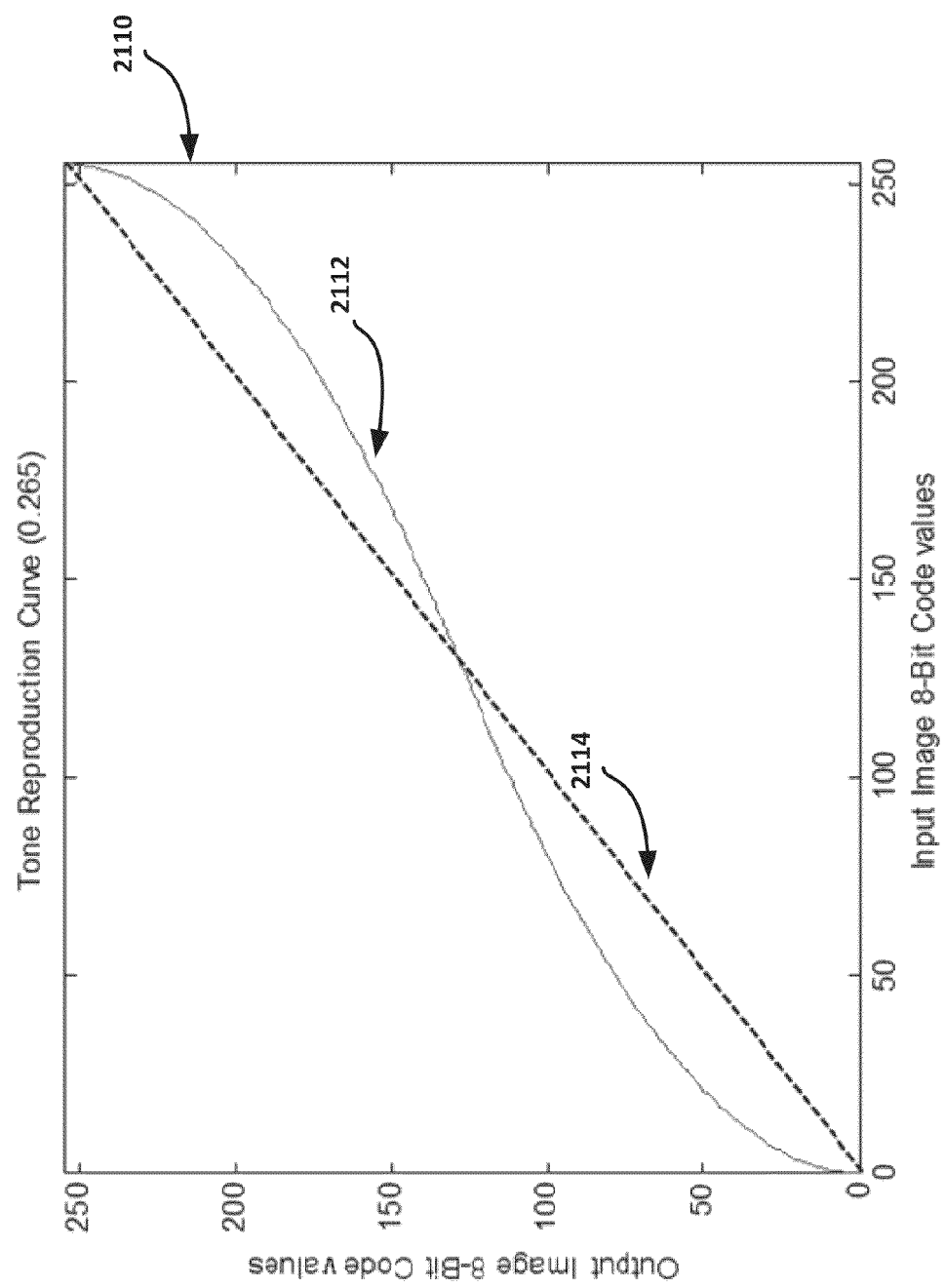


FIGURE 21

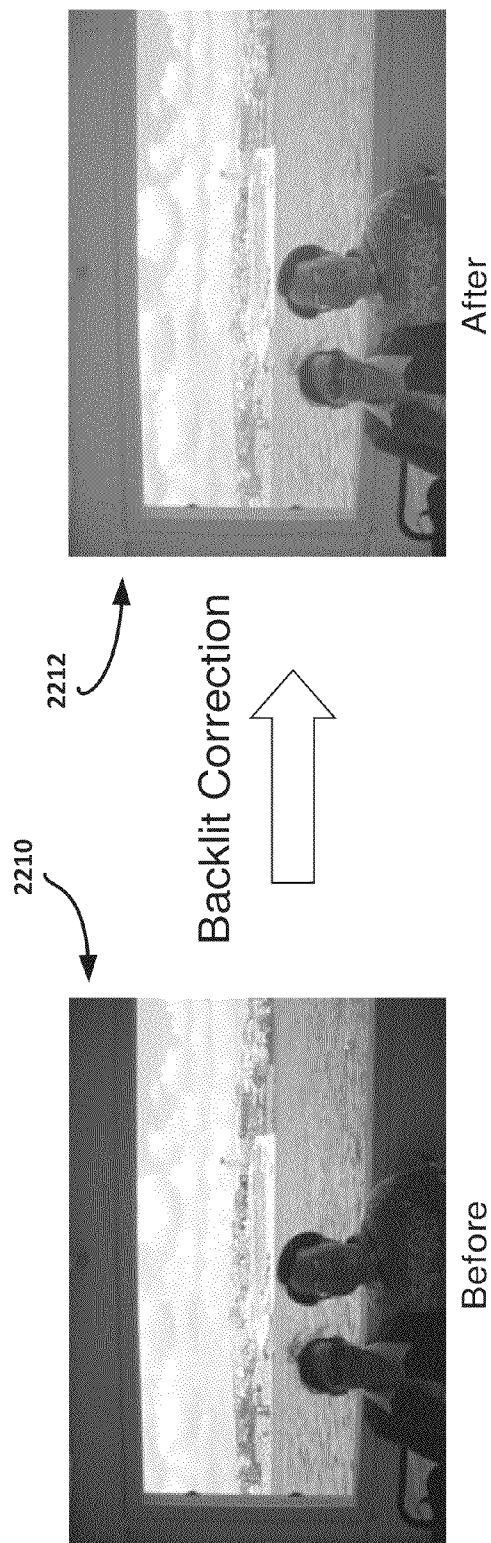


FIGURE 22

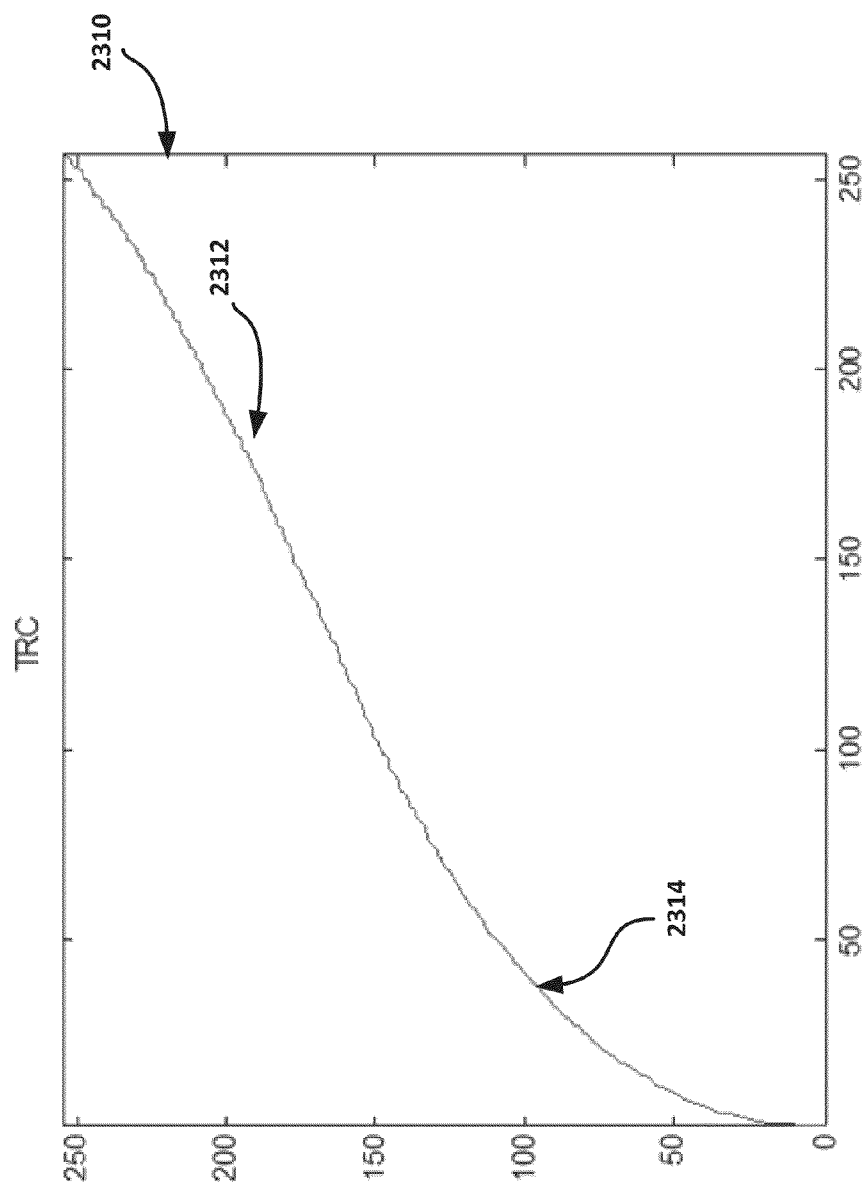


FIGURE 23

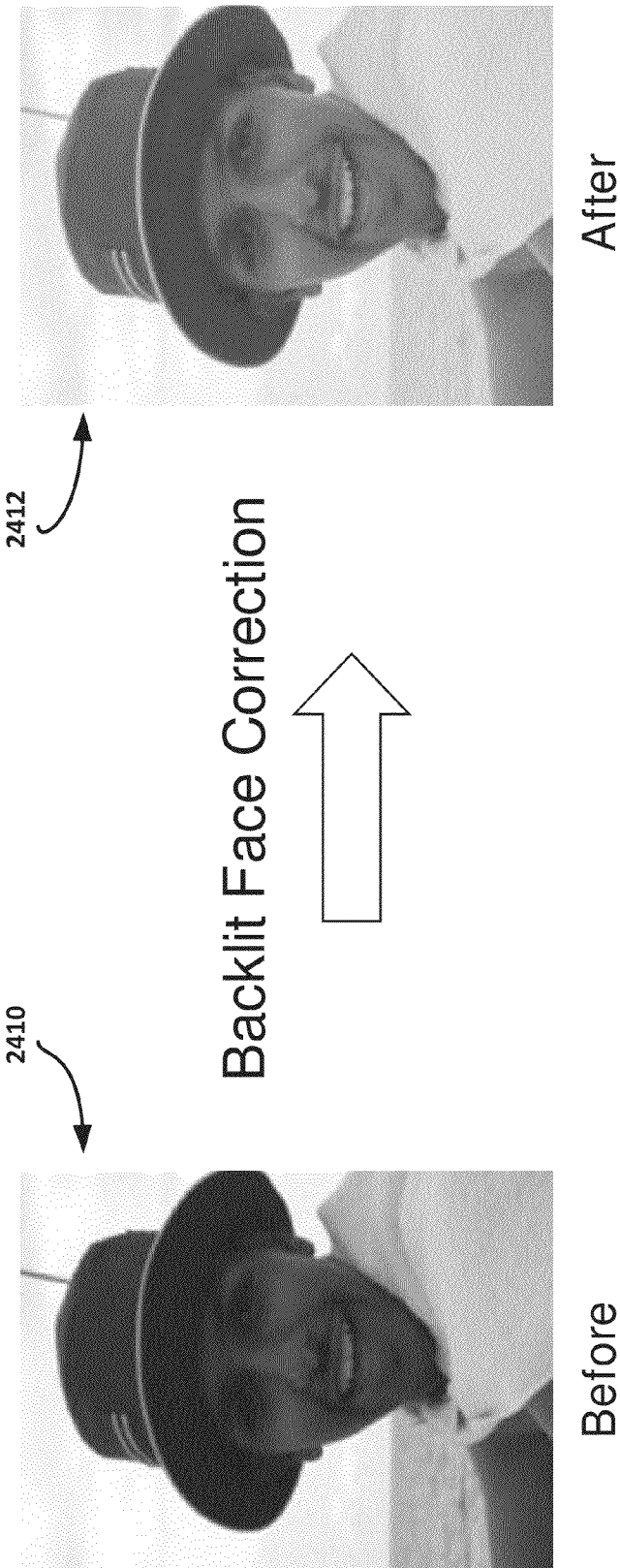


FIGURE 24

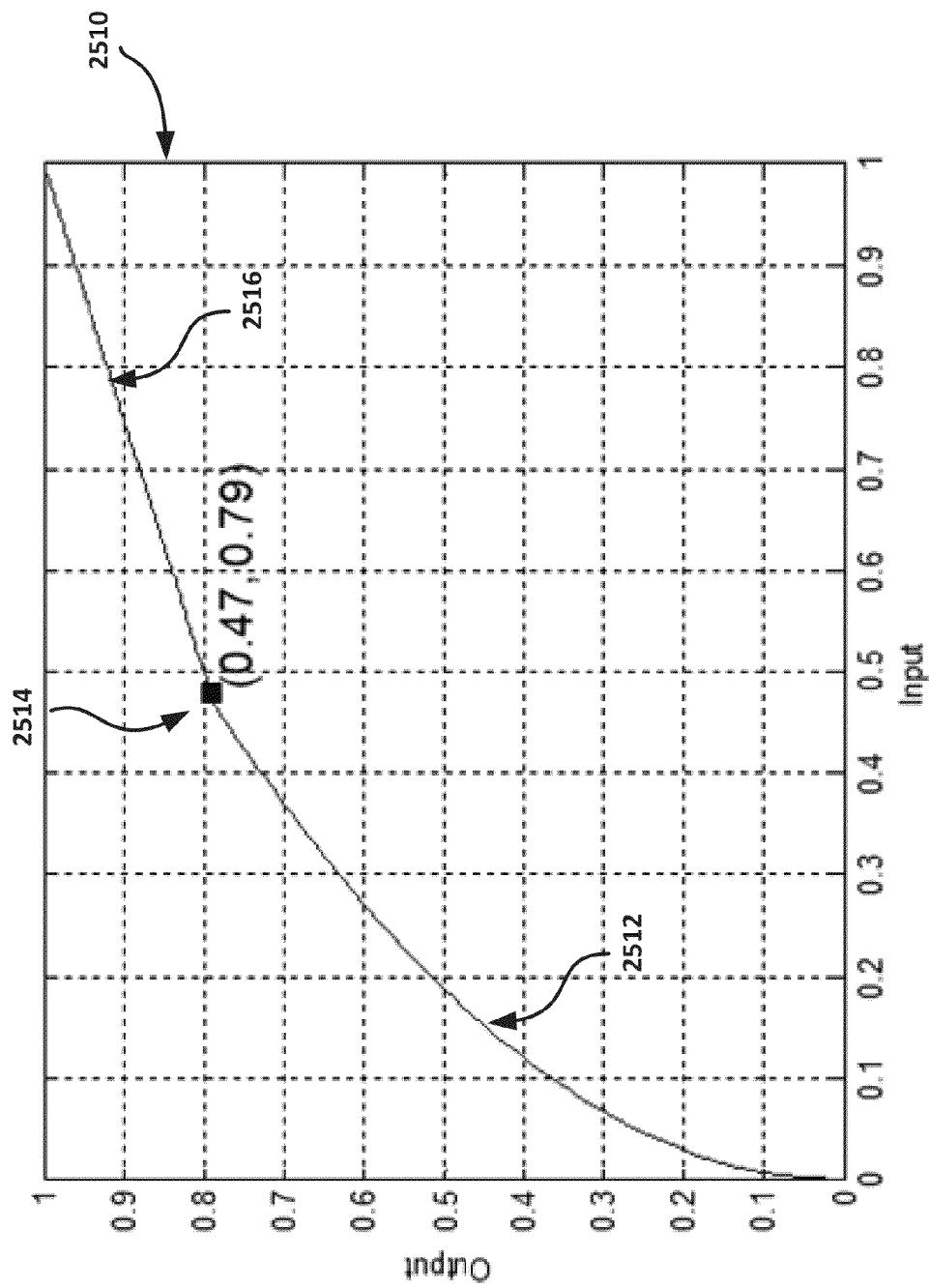


FIGURE 25

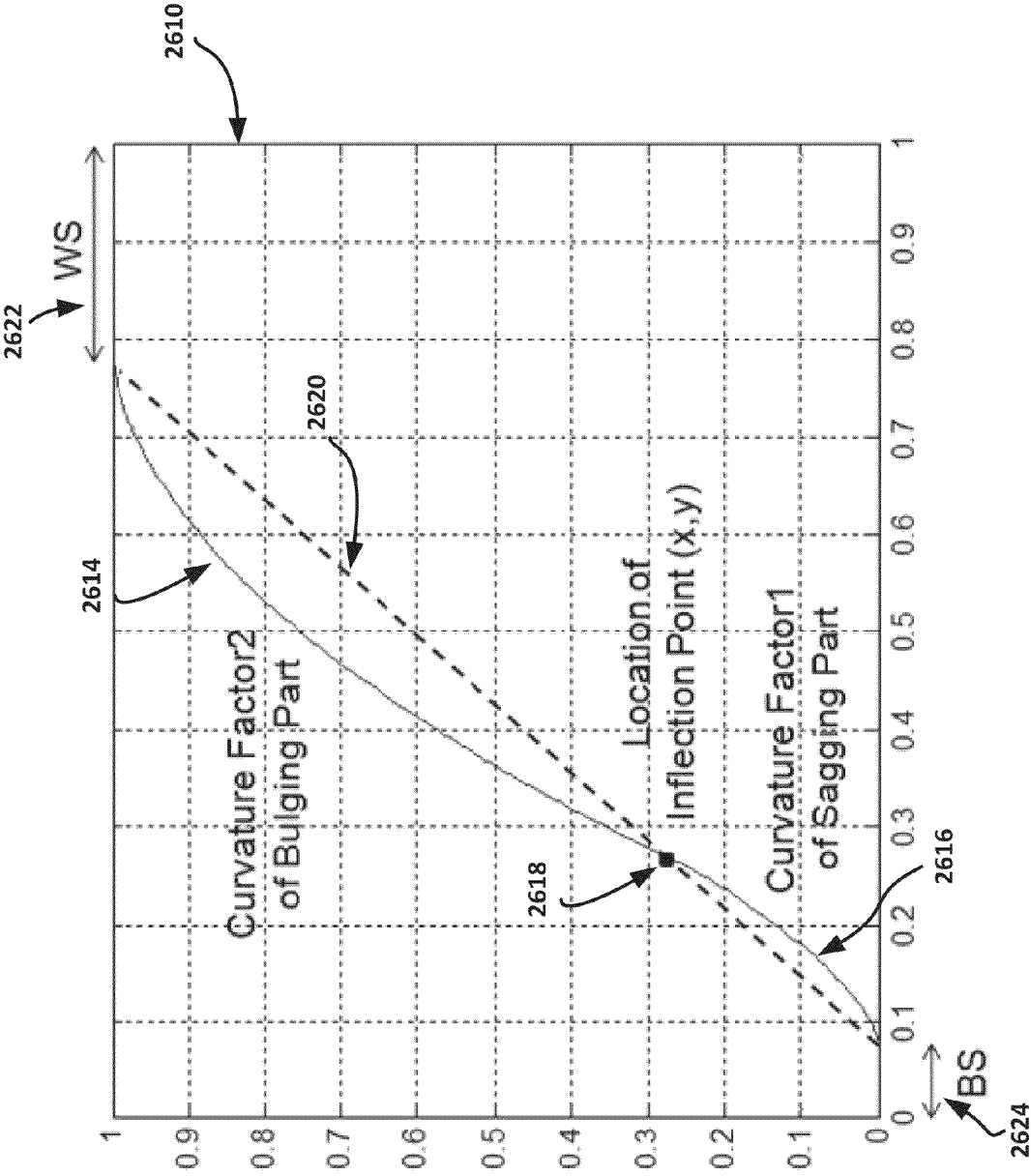


FIGURE 26

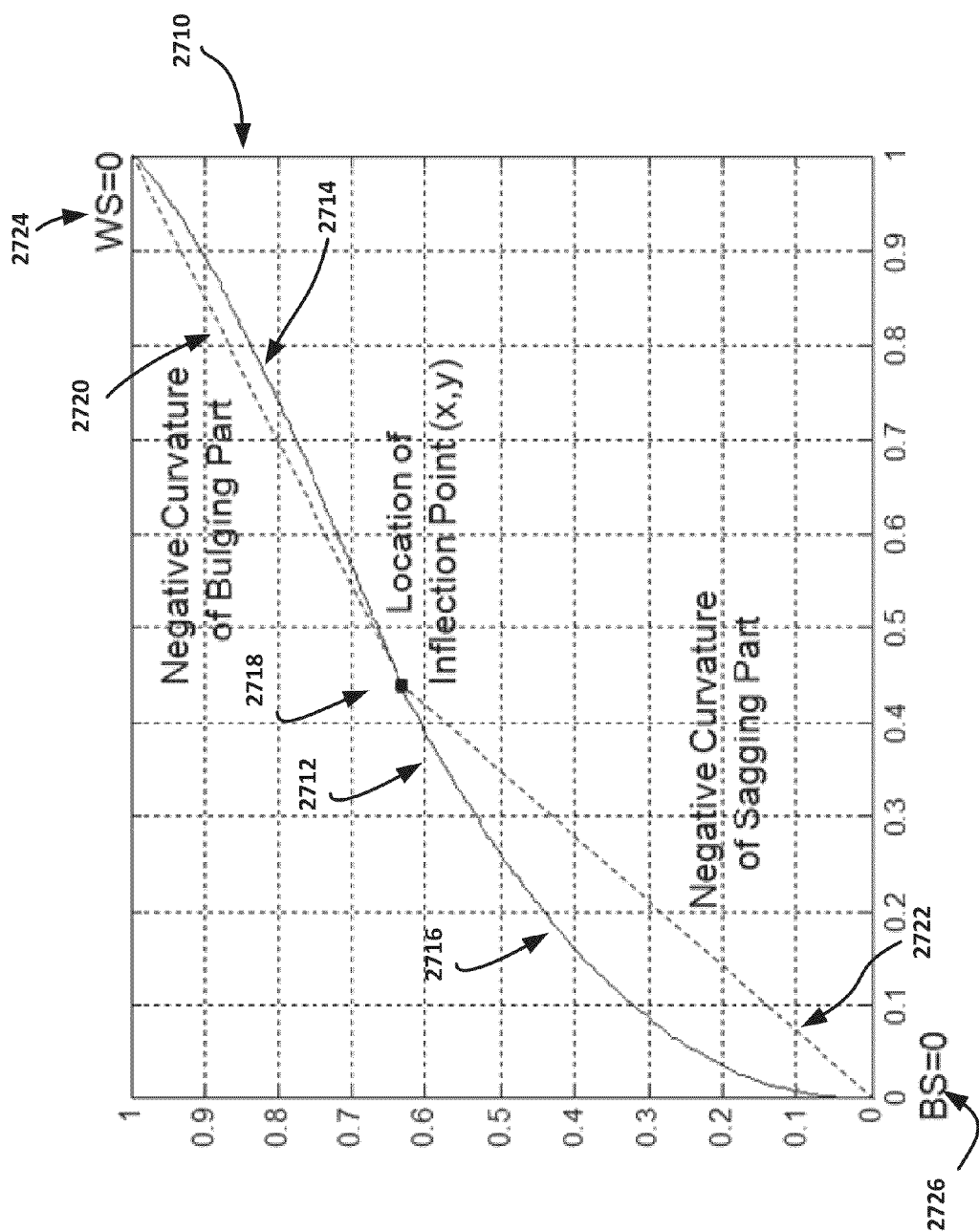


FIGURE 27

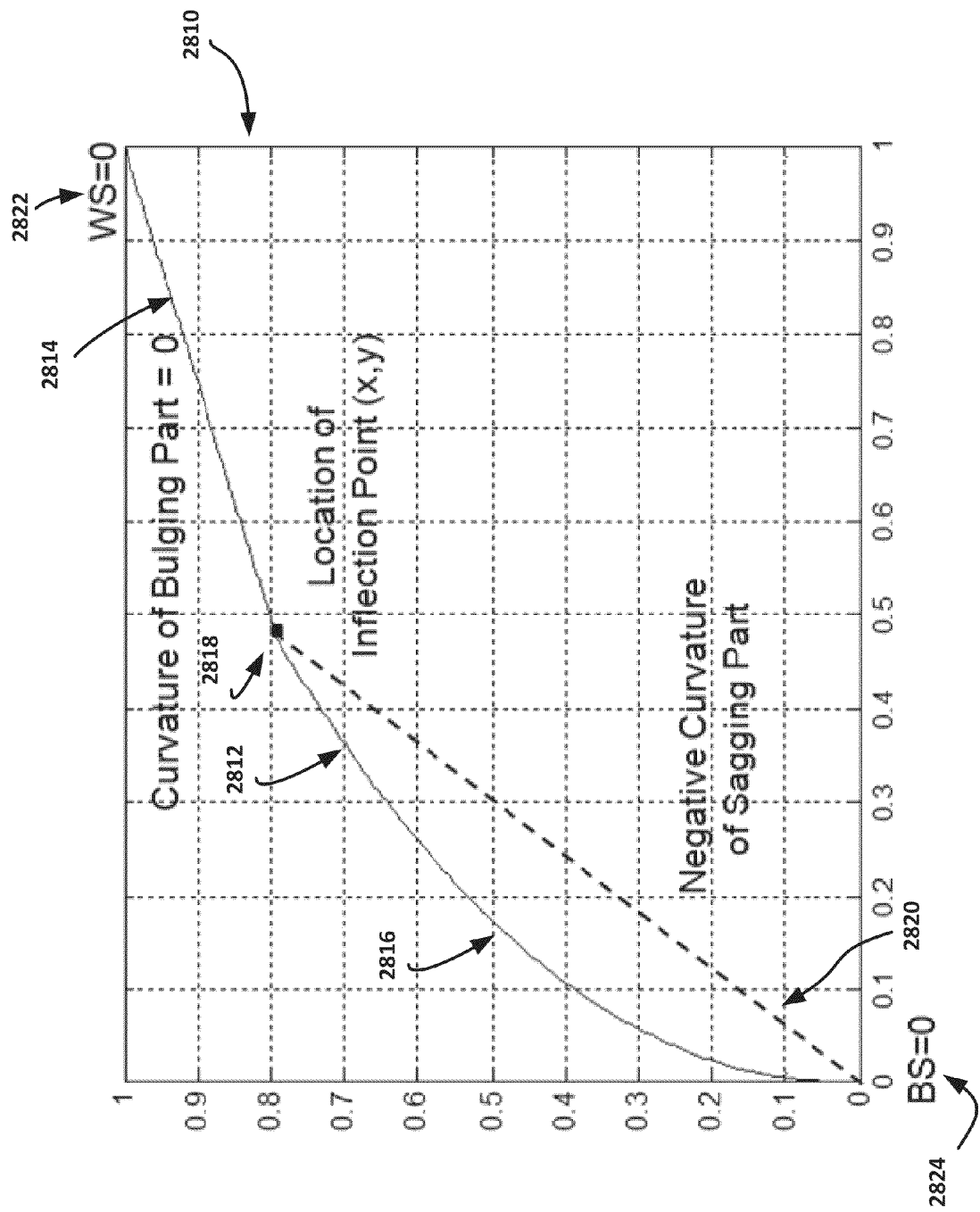


FIGURE 28

DIGITAL IMAGE TONE ADJUSTMENT**RELATED APPLICATION INFORMATION**

This patent claims priority from the following provisional patent applications: U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/258,641 entitled "Digital Image Tone Adjustment" filed Nov. 6, 2009.

This patent is a continuation-in-part of co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/194,025 filed Aug. 19, 2008 entitled "System and Method for Backlit Image Adjustment" which is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference.

This patent is related to co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/940,934 filed Nov. 5, 2010 entitled "Image Contrast Enhancement" which is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference.

This patent is related to co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/941,572 filed Nov. 8, 2010 entitled "System and Method for Contrast Enhancement of Digitally Encoded Images" which is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference.

NOTICE OF COPYRIGHTS AND TRADE DRESS

A portion of the disclosure of this patent document contains material which is subject to copyright protection. This patent document may show and/or describe matter which is or may become trade dress of the owner. The copyright and trade dress owner has no objection to the facsimile reproduction by anyone of the patent disclosure as it appears in the Patent and Trademark Office patent files or records, but otherwise reserves all copyright and trade dress rights whatsoever.

FIELD

This disclosure relates to digital image tone adjustment.

BACKGROUND

Digital image tone adjustment enables a user to improve the image quality of digital images. Digital or other images may have a number of issues that affect the image quality. For example, the image may be too dark. The image may be too bright. The image may be primarily one set of colors (such as primarily a dark image). Portions of images may also suffer from similar problems. A backlit face, for example, may appear very dark relative to its surroundings.

One of the benefits of digital images over physical images is that they may more easily be manipulated using computers. A user may adjust the color, brightness or contrast of pixels in an image, either directly or by application of one or more functions. These functions may detect problem regions in the image, may detect faces or may automatically detect overall problems with the image.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an overall diagram of a system or a method for image tone adjustment.

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of device hardware for use in image tone adjustment.

FIG. 3 is a functional diagram of a device for use in image tone adjustment.

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of controller hardware for use in image tone adjustment;

FIG. 5 is a functional diagram of a controller for use in image tone adjustment.

FIG. 6 is a diagram of a workstation for use in image tone adjustment.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a system for image tone adjustment.

FIG. 8 is a flowchart of a method of image tone adjustment.

FIG. 9 is a depiction of a white stretch operation.

FIG. 10 is a tone reproduction curve suitable for a white stretch operation.

FIG. 11 is the tone reproduction curve of FIG. 10 after a white stretch operation.

FIG. 12 shows is a black stretch operation.

FIG. 13 is a tone reproduction curve suitable for a black stretch operation.

FIG. 14 is the tone reproduction curve of FIG. 13 after a black stretch operation.

FIG. 15 shows contrast stretch operation.

FIG. 16 is a tone reproduction curve suitable for a contrast stretch operation.

FIG. 17 is the tone reproduction curve of FIG. 16 after a contrast stretch operation.

FIG. 18 is a tone reproduction curve suitable for a white stretch operation, a black stretch operation and a contrast stretch operation.

FIG. 19 is a tone reproduction curve with zero black stretch and white stretch and, thus, the tone reproduction curve degenerates to one suitable only for contrast stretch.

FIG. 20 is a tone reproduction curve with zero contrast stretch and, thus, the tone reproduction curve degenerates to one suitable only for black stretch and white stretch.

FIG. 21 is a tone reproduction curve of a reversed s-curve with a curvature factor of 0.265.

FIG. 22 is an example of an image before and after backlit correction.

FIG. 23 is a tone reproduction curve using a reversed s-curve suitable for correcting the image in FIG. 23.

FIG. 24 is an example of an image before and after backlit face correction.

FIG. 25 is a tone reproduction curve using sectional bulging to perform backlit face correction.

FIG. 26 is the generalized form of a tone reproduction curve using the unified formulation for image tone adjustment.

FIG. 27 is an example tone reproduction curve using a reverse s-curve and demonstrating the unified formulation for image tone adjustment.

FIG. 28 is an example tone reproduction curve using a sectional bulging reversed s-curve in terms of the unified formulation for image tone adjustment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Image tone adjustment systems and methods are disclosed. The system of the present invention includes an input to accept an input image. A curve generator is also disclosed that is used to generate a tone reproduction curve including a contrast stretch of the input image, a white stretch of the input image and a black stretch of the input image. Backlit correction is also applied by the tone adjustment corrector to thereby generate a tone adjusted image.

Referring now to FIG. 1, an overall diagram of an example system 100 for implementation of image tone adjustment is shown. The system 100 may be implemented in a distributed computing environment such as computer network 102. The computer network 102 enables the exchange of data between two or more electronic devices. The computer network 102 may be a virtual local area network, a wide area network, a personal area network, a local area network, the Internet, an

intranet, or any combination of these. The computer network **102** may have physical layers and transport layers such as Token-Ring, 802.11(x), Ethernet, or other wireless or wire-based data communication mechanisms.

The system **100** also includes a document processing device **104**, shown in FIG. 1 as a multifunction peripheral device, designed for a variety of document processing operations such as facsimile, scanning, copying, printing, electronic mail, document management and document storage. The Toshiba e-Studio Series Controller is one example of such a device. The document processing device **104** provides remote document processing services to external or network devices. The document processing device **104** may also include an audio reproduction component (not shown) such as a speaker, capable of emitting sounds.

The document processing device **104** is suitably equipped to receive a plurality of portable storage media including Firewire drives, USB drives, SD, MMC, XD, Compact Flash, and Memory Stick. The document processing device **104** includes an associated user interface **106**, such as a touch-screen, LCD display, touch-panel, or alpha-numeric keypad through which an associated user is able to interact directly with the document processing device **104**. The user interface **106** is used to communicate information to and receive selections from a user. The user interface **106** includes various components, used to present data to a user. The user interface **106** typically includes a display for displaying graphical elements, text data or images to a user. The user interface may also receive input from the associated user, and communicate the same to a backend component, such as controller **108**. The document processing device **104** coupled to the computer network **102** via a communications link **112**. Communications links include WiMax, 802.11a, 802.11b, 802.11g, 802.11(x), Bluetooth, the public switched telephone network, a proprietary communications network, infrared, optical, or any other wired or wireless data transmission communications. The document processing device **104** will be better understood in conjunction with the block diagrams illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 3, described below.

The document processing device **104** includes a controller **108** that enables many of the operations of the document processing device **104**. The controller **108** may be embodied in hardware, software, or any combination of the two. The controller **108** is configured to control the operations of the associated document processing device **104**, facilitate the display of images via the user interface **106**, and direct the manipulation of electronic image data. The controller **108** is used to refer to any number of components associated with the document processing device **104**. The functions described as performed by the controller **108** may be performed by any general purpose computing system. The controller **108** will be better understood in conjunction with FIGS. 4 and 5, described below.

The document processing device **104** is connected to a data storage device **110**. The data storage device **110** may be any mass storage device such as magnetic storage drives, a hard disk drive, optical storage devices or flash memory devices. The data storage device **110** can store scanned image data, color measurement data and color calibration data. While FIG. 1 shows the data storage device **110** as a separate component of the system **100**, the data storage device **110** may be implemented as an internal storage component of the document processing device **104** or a component of the controller **108** such as an internal hard disk drive. The data storage device **110** is capable of storing various types of data including document processing instructions, usage data, user interface data, job control data, controller status data, component

execution data, images, advertisements, user information, location information, output templates, mapping data, multimedia data files and fonts.

A user device **114** is also shown in FIG. 1 as a computer workstation connected by means of a communications link **116** with the computer network **102**. The user device **114** is shown as a computer workstation for illustration purposes only. As user device **114** may take any number of forms including a laptop computer, a workstation computer, a personal data assistant, a web-enabled cellular telephone, a smart phone, a proprietary network device, or other web-enabled electronic device. The communications link **116** may be any suitable channel of data communications such as a wired or wireless connection including Bluetooth, WiMax, 802.11a, 802.11b, 802.11g, 802.11(x), a proprietary communications network, infrared, optical, the public switched telephone network, or any wireless or wired communication. The user device **114** facilitates the image tone adjustment and communication with the document processing device **104**. The user device **114** may also include an audio reproduction component (not shown) such as a speaker, or the like, capable of sounds. The user device **114** will better be understood in conjunction with the diagram shown in FIG. 6, described below.

Turning now to FIG. 2, suitable example of a document processing device **104**, shown in FIG. 1, is shown as device **200**. The device **200** includes processor **202**, such as a central processor unit or multiple processors working in concert with one another. The device **200** also includes non-volatile or read only memory **204** which is used for static or fixed data or instructions, such as BIOS functions, system functions, system configuration data, and other routines or data used for operation of the device **200**.

Also included in the device **200** is random access memory **206** such as dynamic random access memory, static random access memory, or any other addressable memory system. Random access memory **206** provides a storage area for data instructions associated with applications and data handling by the processor **202**. A storage interface **208** provides a mechanism for volatile, bulk or long term storage of data associated with the device **200**. The storage interface **208** uses bulk storage, such as any suitable addressable or serial storage, such as a disk, or optical and tape drives as shown as **216**.

A network interface subsystem **210** routes input and output from an associated network allowing the device **200** to communicate to other devices. The network interface subsystem **210** interfaces with one or more connections with external devices to the device **200**. By way of example, one network interface card **214** for data communication with fixed or wired networks, such as Ethernet, Token-Ring, and the like, and a wireless interface **218**, for wireless communication via means such as WiFi, WiMax, wireless modem, cellular network, or any suitable wireless communication system. In the illustration, the network interface card **214** is interconnected for data interchange via a physical network **220**, typically a local area network, wide area network, or a combination of the two.

A bus **212** enables data communication between the processor **202**, read only memory **204**, random access memory **206**, storage interface **208** and the network subsystem **210**. Executable instructions on the device **200** facilitate communication with a plurality of external devices, such as workstations, document processing devices, other servers, or the like. While in operation a typical device operates autonomously. However, direct control by a local user is sometimes desirable. Such control is accomplished via an optional input/output interface **222** to a user input/output panel **224**.

5

The bus **212** is also connected to one or more document processing engines. The printer interface **226**, copier interface **228**, scanner interface **230**, and facsimile interface **232** are examples of document processing engines. These engines facilitate communication with printer engine **234**, copier engine **236**, scanner engine **238**, and facsimile engine **240**, respectively. The device **200** is designed to accomplish one or more document processing functions. Systems capable of more than one document processing operation are commonly referred to as multifunction peripherals or multifunction devices.

Turning now to FIG. **3**, the document processing device **300**, previously depicted in FIG. **1** as the document processing device **104**, is shown. FIG. **3** shows the functionality of the hardware of FIG. **2** in connection with software and operating system functionality. The document processing device **300** includes an engine **302** which facilitates one or more document processing operations.

The document processing engine **302** also includes a print engine **304**, facsimile engine **306**, scanner engine **308** and console panel **310**. The print engine **304** allows for output of physical documents representative of an electronic document. The facsimile engine **306** communicates to or from external facsimile devices via a device, such as a fax modem. The scanner engine **308** receives hard copy documents and corresponding image data. A user interface, such as the console panel **310**, allows a user to input instructions and displays information to a user. The scanner engine **308** is used to accept the input of tangible documents and to convert them into electronic form as bitmapped, vector or page description language format. The scanner engine **308** may also perform optical character recognition. Tangible document scanning also facilitates facsimile output.

As shown in FIG. **3**, the document processing engine also includes an interface **316** with a network via driver **326**, including a network interface card. The document processing engine **302** can interface with the network via various types of connections including wired, wireless or optical data communication.

The document processing engine **302** communicates with one or more device drivers **314**. These device drivers **314** enable data interchange between the document processing engine **302** and one or more physical devices used to accomplish document processing operations. These document processing operations include printing via driver **318**, facsimile communication via driver **320**, scanning via driver **322** and a user interface functions via driver **324**. These various devices may be integrated with one or more corresponding engines associated with the document processing engine **302**. The document processing engine **302**, using the various elements described, is capable of any set or subset of document processing operations. As such, these types of document processors are often described as multi-function peripherals.

Turning now to FIG. **4**, a representative architecture of the controller **400**, shown in FIG. **1** as the controller **108**, is shown. The controller **400** may be any general computing device capable of the methodologies described herein. The controller **400** includes a processor **402**, such as a central processor unit or multiple processors working in concert with one another. Non-volatile or read only memory **404** is used for static or fixed data or instructions, such as BIOS functions, system functions, system configuration data, and other routines or data used for operation of the controller **400**.

The controller **400** also includes random access memory **406**, such as dynamic random access memory, static random access memory or other addressable and writable memory systems. Random access memory provides a storage area for

6

data instructions associated with applications and data handling accomplished by processor **402**. A storage interface **408** provides a mechanism for non-volatile, bulk or long term storage of data associated with the controller **400**. The storage interface **408** uses disks **416** which may be disk-based, optical or tape drives for bulk storage.

A network interface subsystem **410** routes input and output from an associated network allowing the controller **400** to communicate with other devices. The network interface subsystem **410** interfaces with external devices using one or more connections. One network interface card **414** is shown, though more may be employed. The network interface card **414** may be used for data communication with fixed or wired networks, such as Ethernet, Token-Ring, and a wireless interface **418**, for wireless communication via means such as WiFi, WiMax, wireless modem, cellular network or other wireless communication system. The network interface subsystem may use any type of physical or non-physical data transfer layer or protocol layer. The network interface **414** is connected to a physical network **420**, such as a local area network, wide area network or a combination of both.

A bus **412** is used for data communication between the processor **402**, read only memory **404**, random access memory **406**, storage interface **408** and the network interface subsystem **410**. The document processor interface **422** also uses the bus **412** for data communication. The document processor interface **422** communicates with hardware **432** in order to perform one or more document processing operations. The types of operations that may be performed include copying using the copy hardware **424**, scanning using the scan hardware **426**, printing using the print hardware **428**, and facsimile communication using the facsimile hardware **430**. The controller **400** controls each of the document processing operations.

The functionality described herein is implemented on a document processing device **104** including the controller **400** of FIG. **4**, (shown in FIG. **1** as the controller **108**) as an intelligent subsystem associated with a document processing device.

FIG. **5** shows the functionality of the hardware of FIG. **4** in connection with software and operating system functionality. FIG. **5** shows the controller function **500**. The controller function **500** includes a document processing engine **502**. The engine **502** enables printing operations, copy operations, facsimile operations and scanning operations. These types of operations are typical of multi-function devices. However, the subject controller need not have all of the capabilities described. Controllers may implement one or more of the document processing operations described above.

The engine **502** includes a user interface panel **510** for accessing the various functions of the engine **502**. Access may be local or remotely via a remote thin or thick client. The engine **502** may also communicate with the print function **504**, facsimile function **506**, and scan function **508**. These functions enable printing, facsimile transmission and reception, and document scanning for use in securing document images for copying or generating electronic versions.

A job queue **512** stores a series of jobs for execution by the print function **504**, facsimile function **506**, and scan function **508**. Various image forms, such as bitmap, page description language or vector format may be relayed to the job queue **512** from the scan function **508** for handling.

The job queue **512** may also communicate using network services **514**. Information such as, job control, status data, or electronic document data may be exchanged between the job queue **512** and the network services **514**. Network-based access to the controller function **500** using client network

services **520** may also be provided. The network-based access may be accomplished using a hypertext transfer protocol, file transfer protocol, uniform data diagram protocol, or any other network exchange mechanism. The network services **514** also enable data interchange with client network services **520** for communication via FTP, electronic mail or TELNET. The controller function **500** enables output and receipt of electronic documents and user information using the network services **514**.

The job queue **512** may also communicate with an image processor **516**. The image processor **516** may be a raster image processor, page description language interpreter or any suitable mechanism for conversion of an electronic document into a format for use in device functions like print **504**, facsimile **506** or scan **508** functions.

The job queue **512** may also communicate with a parser **518** for use in receiving print job language files from an external device, such as client device services **522**. The client device services **522** may include printing, facsimile transmission, or other input of an electronic document for handling by the controller function **500**. The parser **518** interprets a received electronic document and relays it to the job queue **512** for handling.

Turning now to FIG. 6, a hardware diagram of a workstation **600** is shown. This workstation was previously identified as user device **114** in FIG. 1. The workstation **600** includes a processor **602** which may communicate with read only memory **604**, non-volatile read only memory, volatile read only memory or a combination of both, random access memory **606**, display interface **608**, storage interface **610**, and network interface **612**. The bus **614** communicates and interfaces with the various modules. The read only memory **604** may include firmware, such as static data or fixed instructions, BIOS, system functions, configuration data, and other routines used during the operation of the workstation **600** and CPU **602**. The random access memory **606** also provides a storage area for data and instructions associated with applications and data handling by the processor **602**.

The display interface **608** receives data or instructions from other components on the bus **614** which is used to display a user interface. The display interface **608** provides output to a display terminal **628**, such as a monitor, LCD or plasma display device.

The storage interface **610** provides non-volatile, bulk or long term storage of data or instructions in the workstation **600**. The storage interface **610** may use storage **618** which may take the form of a disk, tape, CD, DVD, or other reasonably high capacity addressable or serial storage medium.

The network interface **612** communicates to at least one other network interface, shown as network interface **620**, such as a network interface card, and wireless network interface **630**, such as a WiFi wireless network card. A network interface **612** may communicate using both physical and protocol layers. It may also use any wired or wireless system, such as Ethernet, Token-Ring, any other wide area or local area network communication system, WiFi or WiMax. The network interface **620** is interconnected for data interchange using a physical network **632**, such as a local area network, wide area network, or a combination of both.

An input/output interface **616** uses the bus **614** connected to an input device **622**, such as a keyboard or a mouse. The input/output interface **616** also provides data output to a peripheral interface **624**, such as a USB, universal serial bus output, SCSI or Firewire (IEEE 1394) output. The input/output interface **616** may also communicate with a pointing device interface **626** used to connect to devices, such as a mouse, light pen or touch screen.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of an image tone adjustment system **700**. The image tone adjustment system may be implemented in the controller **108** or user device **114**, as described with reference to FIGS. 1-6 above. The tone adjustment system **700** includes an input **702** for receipt of image data into a digital image processor **704**. The digital image processor **704** may include at least one CPU **706** and associated data storage **708**. The image data includes digital pixel values, each including a brightness value.

The system **700** further employs a curve generator **710** that generates a tone reproduction curve (TRC) function. The tone reproduction curve includes six parameters. These are the black stretch (BS), the white stretch (WS), the curvature factor of the sagging part of the s-curve, the curvature factor of the bulging part of the s-curve, and the x and y coordinates of the inflection point of the curve. Collectively, these make up the tone reproduction curve. When the x and y coordinates are equal, the united function degenerates to black stretch plus white stretch plus contrast stretch of the s-curve (CS) or BS+WS+CS.

The tone adjustment system **700** also includes a function generator **712**, a tone adjustment corrector **714**, a backlit detector **716** and an output **718**. The function generator **712** is used to generate the function necessary to describe the curve generated by the curve generator **710**. The tone adjustment corrector **714** applies the tone reproduction curve to the image data so as to generate contrast enhanced image data. The backlit detector **716** detects images that contain backlighting and that are suitable for backlit correction. The output **718** may output the contrast enhanced image data to an associated image rendering device **720**.

Each of these elements is shown as independent hardware in the tone adjustment system **700**. However, each of the function generator **712**, tone adjustment corrector **714**, and the backlit detector **716** may be implemented in software within the digital image processor **720**.

The system **100** and components described above with respect to FIGS. 1-7, will be better understood in conjunction with the methodologies described hereinafter with respect to FIG. 8 as well as the example illustrations of FIGS. 9-28.

Referring now to FIG. 8 a flowchart of a method of image tone adjustment. The image tone adjustment system **700** accepts an input image. This image may be stored in data storage **708** or be received directly from an input, such as input **702**. Upon receipt of the input image, the backlit detector **716** determines whether the image is backlit **812**. This process may detect, for example, whether the primary subject of the application is darker than the surroundings. It may, alternatively, detect that the primary portions of a histogram of the image are weighted heavily at the light and dark ends with few code values in the middle of the histogram. A method of image backlit detection and correction is described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/194,025 filed Aug. 19, 2008 entitled "System and Method for Backlit Image Adjustment."

If the image is backlit, then the image tone adjustment system tests to determine whether the input image is a portrait, i.e., an image with exactly one human face **814**. This test may use face detection technology to detect if there is one frontal, upright big enough human face in an image and, thereby, determine that the image is a portrait.

If the image is a portrait, then backlit face correction is used **816**. This type of correction utilizes sectional bulging to perform the backlit face correction **816**. Sectional bulging will be described in more detail below. If the image is not a portrait, then reverse s-curve is used to perform the backlit scene

correction. The process of applying a reverse s-curve will be described in more detail below.

If the image is not backlit, flow proceeds to BS+WS+CS (s-curve) processing 820. A BS+WS+CS (s-curve) is applied to the input image after it has been through the backlit processing to create the resulting output image 822. The process of applying each of the white stretch, black stretch and contrast stretch operations of the BS+WS+CS (s-curve) is described in more detail below. The resulting output image 822 has been automatically corrected for backlighting issues, brightness, darkness and contrast.

Turning now to FIG. 9, a white stretch operation is shown. In the white stretch operation, an image such as image 910 is transformed into an output image such as image 912. In order to perform this operation, the image tone adjustment system determines that the dynamic color range of the image 910 is utilizing less than the full 256 code values in the full range of one of the RGB values. In other embodiments, more than 256 code values may be available, but 256 is used throughout this application as an example of the RGB implementation in which 256 code values are available for each of the three RGB colors. Preferably, where operations are performed on the 256 code values for one of the RGB colors, the same operation is performed on all code values for the other two colors so as to maintain image color consistency.

This may be most easily seen by the human eye as a histogram that plots the number of occurrences of each image code value in an image. In FIG. 9, the histogram 914 shows that the dynamic range utilized by the image is only from 0 to N, where N is significantly less than the total available range of 256. The code value range used by image 910 is shown as range 916. The unused range is shown as range 918.

If the full dynamic range is not being used, the present application applies the white stretch to the range 916 and "stretches" the color range so as to utilize the full dynamic color range. The results can be seen in image 912 and the histogram 920 associated with the image. The range 922 is the full dynamic range of 0 to 255 of one of the three RGB colors.

Turning now to FIG. 10, a tone reproduction curve suitable for a white stretch operation is shown. In this figure, graph 1010 includes the tone reproduction curve 1012 which falls short of utilizing the entire 256 full dynamic color range. It falls short by range 1014. For comparison, the straight line 1116 is an identity tone reproduction curve where each output image code value is set equal to the corresponding input code value.

Turning now to FIG. 11, the tone reproduction curve of FIG. 10 after a white stretch operation is shown. The graph 1110 still includes the tone reproduction curve 1112 and the range 1114 of FIG. 10 (1012 and 1014, respectively). However, the graph 1110 now includes a white stretch tone reproduction curve 1116. As can be seen, this curve utilizes the full range of 256 code values.

Turning now to FIG. 12, a black stretch operation is shown. This operation begins with an image such as image 1210 and ends with an image such as image 1212. The black stretch operation may be most easily understood with reference to histogram 1214. Similarly to image 910, image 1210 is not utilizing the full range of 256 code values. In particular, the range 1216 from N to 255 is all that is being used. The range 1218 from 0 to N is not being used. Histogram 1220 is the histogram for image 1212 after the black stretch operation has been applied. Range 1222 is now the full range of code values from 0 to 255.

Turning now to FIG. 13, a tone reproduction curve suitable for a black stretch operation is shown. This graph 1310 shows a tone reproduction curve 1312 that is not utilizing the full

range of code values available. In particular, the range 1314 is now being used by the image, such as image 1210.

Turning now to FIG. 14, the tone reproduction curve of FIG. 13 after a black stretch operation is shown. The graph 1410 depicts the tone reproduction curve 1412 (corresponding to 1312 in FIG. 13) and also shows the range 1416 of unused code value range. However, the tone reproduction curve 1414 is the same curve after the black stretch operation has been performed. As can be seen, it utilizes the full range of RGB code values from 0 to 255.

Turning now to FIG. 15, a contrast stretch operation is shown. Image 1510 is an image before the contrast stretch operation and image 1512 is the image after the contrast stretch operation. The process may be most easily understood with reference to histogram 1514 and histogram 1522. In histogram 1514 the inflection point 1518 is selected so that the darkest portions fall to its left. This range 1516 will receive little stretching. The range 1520 to the right of the inflection point (P) 1518 will be stretched so as to better fill the entire range. In the resulting histogram 1522, the inflection point 1526 remains as the same point (as inflection point 1518) in the tone reproduction curve, but the range 1524 has been stretched so as to better fill out the entire range of code values. Similarly, range 1528 has been stretched so that its right tail is not so long. This enables the brighter colors to stand out more effectively from the darker colors.

Turning now to FIG. 16, a tone reproduction curve suitable for a contrast stretch operation is shown. The graph 1610 includes tone reproduction curve 1612 that is simply the identity of the entire code value range. However, FIG. 17 shows the tone reproduction curve 1712 of FIG. 16 (as tone reproduction curve 1612) after a contrast stretch operation. An inflection point 1714, also denoted by the line 1716 sets the point at which the s-curve of contrast stretch is applied to the tone reproduction curve 1712.

After application of the contrast stretch, the sagging portion 1718 falls below the original tone reproduction curve 1712 and the bulging portion 1720 rises substantially above the original tone reproduction curve 1712.

A method for generating the inflection point and curvature factors for the upper and lower portions of the s-shaped curve is described in co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/940,934 filed Nov. 5, 2010 and entitled "Image Contrast Enhancement".

In order to generate the contrast stretch s-shaped curve, an evenly spaced array A1 is created from 0 to 1 with a step of, for example, 0.1. The sagging portion of the s-shaped curve S is generated first. The curvature factor for the sagging portion of the s-curve F1 is generated according to the method disclosed in the application identified above. The exponent for the sagging portion E1 is generated as $E1 = 0.01 - 0.20 * F1 + 8 * F1^2$. The sagging portion of the s-shaped curve S is then generated as $S = A1^{E1}$.

The bulging portion of the s-curve B is generated using an input curvature factor for the bulging portion F2 which is generated according to the application identified above. The exponent for the bulging portion E2 is generated as $E2 = 0.01 - 0.20 * F2 + 8 * F2^2$. A temporary variable TEMP is generated as $TEMP = A1^{E2}$. An array A2 of numbers from 100 down to 1 with a step of -1 is created. The bulging portion of the s-shaped curve B is then generated as $B = 1 + (1 - TEMP(A2))$.

After the (x,y) coordinates of the inflection point are calculated as described above, the two halves of the s-shaped curve S and B are scaled according to the inflection point. The scaling factor for the x value XScale1 is generated as $XScale1 = x/0.5$ and the scaling factor for the y value YScale1 is generated as $YScale1 = y/0.5$. The scaled sagging portion

11

SScale is then calculated as SScale=an interpolation of A1 and S*YScale/2 over the range 0 to 1 with a step of 0.01/XScale1. The scaled bulging portion BScale is calculated as BScale=an interpolation of A2 and B*(((1-y)/0.5)/2-(1-((1-y)/0.5-1))) over the range 1 to 100 with a step of x/0.5.

The two halves of the curve are then concatenated into the s-curve S-Curve and scaled into an array of 256 entries (in the RGB color scheme) using interpolation. The resulting 256-element array is the scaled S-Curve SS. Other array sizes may be used with other color schemes.

Next, the scaled S-Curve SS is further scaled horizontally according to the black stretch and white stretch. The BS and WS scaled S-Curve SSC is generated as SSC=an interpolation of A1 over SS with a step of $1.0/(2*(255-BS-WS))$. The constants Low, High, ILow and IHigh are generated as Low=BS; High=255-WS, ILow=an array of 0s from 1-256 and IHigh=an array of 1s from 1-256. Finally, the three pieces are concatenated together as an array of three portions the array is filled with ILow (1 to Low) at the low end, with SSC (from Low+1 to High) and IHigh (from High+1 to 256) to thereby generate an adjusted tone reproduction curve.

In the event of a BS, WS or CS of zero, the unified formulation described above degenerates into a function lacking that variable. For example, if there is no black stretch for a given tone reproduction curve, the formulation above generates a value for BS that does not affect the resulting curve at all. Similarly, if there is no curvature factor input, that portion of the formulation does not affect the resulting tone reproduction curve. In this way, the formulation set forth above is a unified tone reproduction for black stretch, white stretch and contrast stretch.

Turning now to FIG. 18, an exemplary tone reproduction curve to implement a white stretch operation, a black stretch operation and a contrast stretch operation is shown. In particular, graph 1810 shows a tone reproduction curve 1812 that includes a range 1814 suitable for a white stretch operation, a range 1816 suitable for a black stretch operation a sagging portion 1818 an inflection point 1820 and a bulging portion 1822. The contrast of the image may be further enhanced by performing each of the BS+WS+CS operations.

FIG. 19 shows a tone reproduction curve with zero black stretch and white stretch and, thus, the tone reproduction curve degenerates to one suitable only for contrast stretch is shown. In particular, the graph 1910 includes a tone reproduction curve 1912 that includes no range for white stretch 1914 or range for white stretch 1916 because both end-points of the tone reproduction curve touch the corners of the graph 1910. Accordingly, only a contrast stretch may be applied to this tone reproduction curve 1912. Applying the formula described above, the s-curve applied to the tone reproduction curve 1912 when WS equals 0 and BS equals 0 will degenerate to only a contrast stretch s-curve.

FIG. 20 shows a tone reproduction curve with zero contrast stretch and, thus, the tone reproduction curve degenerates to one suitable only for black stretch and white stretch. The graph 2010 includes a tone reproduction curve 2012 that is a straight line. No inflection point or curvature factor has been selected. However, the range 2014 and range 1016 are greater than zero, thus the white stretch and black stretch operations may be performed while ignoring the contrast stretch. In this way, the formula described above will degenerate into only a BS+WS formula, when no inflection point or curvature factor for the s-curve is given.

FIG. 21 is a tone reproduction curve of a reversed s-curve with a curvature factor of 0.265. A reversed s-curve is used in backlit correction. In images with backlighting issues, the primary problem is that there are very dark areas and very

12

light areas, but no or very few in-between areas. Use of the reversed s-curve serves to increase the range over which the colors used in the image (darks and lights for non-portraits or darks only for portraits) may be seen. In increasing this range, the contrast between the portions become more readily distinguishable from one another and, thus, the image becomes clearer.

The graph 2110 includes the tone reproduction curve 2112 of a reversed s-curve with curvature factor 0.265. A curvature factor of approximately 0.365 is very nearly the identity as described in co-pending application Ser. No. 12/940,934 referenced above. This curvature factor is snapped to the identity in the present application because it is so close. As the curvature factor is decreased, the curvature of the reversed s-curve increases. The reversed s-curve can be applied to a non-portrait image to provide backlit correction.

Turning now to FIG. 22, an example of an image before and after backlit correction. Image 2210 is an image in which it is difficult to see the individuals' faces and the detail of the surroundings. Image 2212 is the image after the application of backlit correction. The image is of a much higher quality. The individuals' faces and detail of the surroundings are visible after the application of backlit correction. Because this is a non-portrait, the reversed s-curve, such as shown in FIG. 21 is used.

FIG. 23 is a tone reproduction curve using a reversed s-curve suitable for correcting the backlit image in FIG. 22. The graph 2310 includes an upper sagging portion 2312 and a lower bulging portion 2314. This is the inverse of the typical s-curve used for contrast enhancement. The inverse of the typical s-curve generally lightens dark colors and darkens bright colors.

The inflection point is selected so as to increase the color range used at the lower ranges and make the image higher contrast in the darker ranges where needed. The inflection point and curvature factor for reversed s-curves are determined in a manner identical to that used with a typical s-curve used for contrast enhancement, however, with the understanding that it will be applied to a reversed s-curve.

Turning now to FIG. 24, an example of an image before and after backlit face correction is shown. Image 2410 is an image in which the facial features of the portrait are difficult to discern. Image 2412 is an image after the application of backlit face correction is applied.

FIG. 25 is a tone reproduction curve using sectional bulging to perform backlit face correction. This graph 2510 includes a tone reproduction line made up of three parts. The first is a curved upward-bulging portion of a reverse s-curve 2512. This portion of the curve is calculated in the same way as that described above with regard to FIGS. 23 and 24. The inflection point 2514 is also calculated in the same way.

The upper range of the code values is drawn simply as a straight line 2516. This serves to essentially stretch the remainder of the code values for the lighter colors over the remainder of the available code value range. This allows the contrast of that portion of the code values range to be, essentially, maintained while still providing greater range of contrast for the faces in the portraits.

Turning now to FIG. 26, the generalized form of a tone reproduction curve using the unified formulation for image tone adjustment is shown. The graph 2610 includes an s-curve 2612 with an upper bulging part 2614, a lower sagging part 2616, and an inflection point 2618. The upper bulging part 2614 has one curvature factor and the lower sagging part 2616 has another curvature factor. The s-curve 2612 is also failing to utilize all of the available code value range, both in blacks

13

and whites. Accordingly, there is a range **2622** available for white stretch and another range **2624** available for black stretch.

Turning now to FIG. **27**, an example tone reproduction curve using a reversed s-curve and demonstrating the unified formulation for image tone adjustment is shown. The graph **2710** includes an s-curve **2712** with an upper sagging portion **2714**, a lower bulging portion **2716**, and an inflection point **2718**. The lines **2720** and **2722** show the extent of the curvature factor for each of the upper sagging portion **2714** and lower bulging portion **2716**. In this graph **2710**, there is no range **2724** for white stretch or range **2726** for black stretch. Though, in other forms of the reversed s-curve both may be found. This type of curve is used for non-portrait backlit correction.

Turning now to FIG. **28**, an example tone reproduction curve using a sectional bulging reversed s-curve in terms of the unified formulation for image tone adjustment is shown. This graph **2810** includes a reversed s-curve **2812** with an upper straight line **2814**, a lower bulging portion **2816**, and an inflection point **2818**. The straight line **2820** shows the extent of the curvature factor for the lower bulging portion. Again, there is no range **2822** for white stretch and no range **2824** for black stretch. Though, this tone reproduction curve may be used in other forms including ranges for both white and black stretch. This type of curve is used for portrait backlit correction.

Closing Comments

Throughout this description, the embodiments and examples shown should be considered as exemplars, rather than limitations on the apparatus and procedures disclosed or claimed. Although many of the examples presented herein involve specific combinations of method acts or system elements, it should be understood that those acts and those elements may be combined in other ways to accomplish the same objectives. With regard to flowcharts, additional and fewer steps may be taken, and the steps as shown may be combined or further refined to achieve the methods described herein. Acts, elements and features discussed only in connection with one embodiment are not intended to be excluded from a similar role in other embodiments.

As used herein, “plurality” means two or more. As used herein, a “set” of items may include one or more of such items. As used herein, whether in the written description or the claims, the terms “comprising”, “including”, “carrying”, “having”, “containing”, “involving”, and the like are to be understood to be open-ended, i.e., to mean including but not limited to. Only the transitional phrases “consisting of” and “consisting essentially of”, respectively, are closed or semi-closed transitional phrases with respect to claims. Use of ordinal terms such as “first”, “second”, “third”, etc., in the claims to modify a claim element does not by itself connote any priority, precedence, or order of one claim element over another or the temporal order in which acts of a method are performed, but are used merely as labels to distinguish one claim element having a certain name from another element having a same name (but for use of the ordinal term) to distinguish the claim elements. As used herein, “and/or” means that the listed items are alternatives, but the alternatives also include any combination of the listed items.

It is claimed:

1. A system for digital image tone adjustment comprising including a processor and associated memory, comprising: an input to accept an input image;

14

a backlit detector for detecting images suitable for backlit correction;

a curve generator to generate a tone reproduction curve including a backlit correction and a contrast stretch of the tone reproduction curve in the form of an s-shaped curve;

a tone adjustment corrector to generate a white stretch of the tone reproduction curve, to generate a black stretch of the tone reproduction curve, and to apply the tone reproduction curve to the input image to generate a tone adjusted image such that:

if the input image is backlit and not a portrait, applying backlit scene correction using a reversed s-curve; and

if the input image is a backlit portrait, applying backlit face correction using sectional bulging; and

an output to output the tone adjusted image to an associated image rendering device.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the reversed s-curve includes a bulging lower portion where relative brightness is increased, a sagging upper portion where relative darkness is decreased, and an inflection point as a demarcation between the bulging lower portion and the sagging upper portion.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the sectional bulging takes the form of a bulging lower portion where relative brightness is increased, a straight upper portion, and an inflection point as the demarcation between the bulging lower portion and the straight upper portion.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the white stretch includes mapping each of the pixel values from a white stretch point at which the whitest pixel color value of the input image appears to a white color value.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein the black stretch includes mapping of each of the pixel values from a black stretch point at which the darkest pixel color value of the input image appears to a black color value.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein the contrast stretch includes mapping each of the pixel values along the tone reproduction curve to an s-curve including a bulging upper portion where relative brightness is increased, a sagging lower portion where relative darkness is decreased, and an inflection point as a demarcation between the bulging upper portion and the sagging lower portion.

7. A method of digital image tone adjustment comprising: detecting that an input image is suitable for backlit correction;

generating a tone reproduction curve including a backlit correction and a contrast stretch of the tone reproduction curve in the form of an s-shaped curve;

generating a white stretch of the tone reproduction curve; generating a black stretch of the tone reproduction curve; applying the tone reproduction curve to the input image to generate a tone adjusted image such that:

if the input image is backlit and not a portrait, applying backlit scene correction using a reversed s-curve; and

if the input image is a backlit portrait, applying backlit face correction using sectional bulging; and

outputting the tone adjusted image to an associated image rendering device.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the reversed s-curve includes a bulging lower portion where relative brightness is increased, a sagging upper portion where relative darkness is decreased, and an inflection point as a demarcation between the bulging lower portion and the sagging upper portion.

9. The method of claim 7 wherein the sectional bulging takes the form of a bulging lower portion where relative brightness is increased, a straight upper portion, and an

15

inflection point as the demarcation between the bulging lower portion and the straight upper portion.

10. The method of claim 7 wherein the white stretch includes mapping each of the pixel values from a white stretch point at which the whitest pixel color value of the input image appears to a white color value.

11. The method of claim 7 wherein the black stretch includes mapping of each of the pixel values from a black stretch point at which the darkest pixel color value of the input image appears to a black color value.

12. The method of claim 7 wherein the contrast stretch includes mapping each of the pixel values along the tone reproduction curve to an s-curve including a bulging upper portion where relative brightness is increased, a sagging lower portion where relative darkness is decreased, and an inflection point as a demarcation between the bulging upper portion and the sagging lower portion.

13. Apparatus comprising a storage medium storing an image tone adjustment program having instructions which when executed by a processor will cause the processor to adjust the tone of images, the instructions of the image tone adjustment program for:

detecting that an input image is suitable for backlit correction;

generating a tone reproduction curve including a backlit correction and a contrast stretch of the tone reproduction curve in the form of an s-shaped curve;

generating a white stretch of the tone reproduction curve;

generating a black stretch of the tone reproduction curve;

applying the tone reproduction curve to the input image to generate a tone adjusted image such that:

16

if the input image is backlit and not a portrait, applying backlit scene correction using a reversed s-curve; and if the input image is a backlit portrait, applying backlit face correction using sectional bulging; and

outputting the tone adjusted image to an associated image rendering device.

14. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the reversed s-curve includes a bulging lower portion where relative brightness is increased, a sagging upper portion where relative darkness is decreased, and an inflection point as a demarcation between the bulging lower portion and the sagging upper portion.

15. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the sectional bulging takes the form of a bulging lower portion where relative brightness is increased, a straight upper portion, and an inflection point as the demarcation between the bulging lower portion and the straight upper portion.

16. The method of claim 13 wherein the white stretch includes mapping each of the pixel values from a white stretch point at which the whitest pixel color value of the input image appears to a white color value and wherein the black stretch includes mapping of each of the pixel values from a black stretch point at which the darkest pixel color value of the input image appears to a black color value.

17. The method of claim 13 wherein the contrast stretch includes mapping each of the pixel values along the tone reproduction curve to an s-curve including a bulging upper portion where relative brightness is increased, a sagging lower portion where relative darkness is decreased, and an inflection point as a demarcation between the bulging upper portion and the sagging lower portion.

* * * * *